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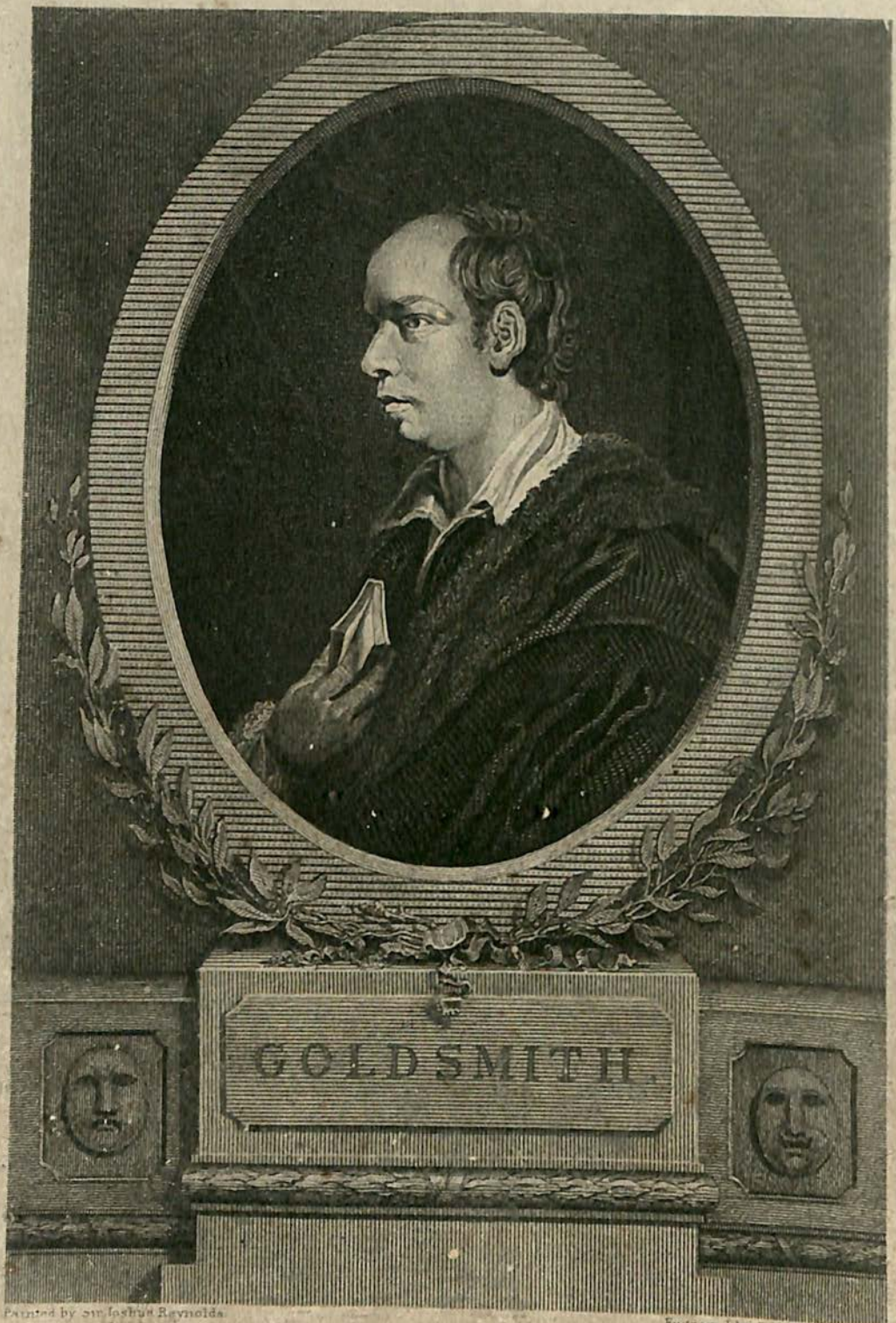
THE LIFE OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH



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THE LIFE OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH

By FRANK FRANKFORT MOORE
AUTHOR OF "THE JESSAMY BRIDE" "THE FATAL GIFT" "A GEORGIAN PAGEANT" ETC. ETC.

WITH NINE ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE LIFE OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH

INTRODUCTION

BOSWELL ON GOLDSMITH

I

OLIVER GOLDSMITH has ever been the best loved of English writers. He is the Benjamin of the large family of eighteenth century poets, of whom Dryden was the Jacob and Pope the Judah. We venerate Dryden, we admire Pope, we esteem Young, we quote Gray, we neglect Thomson, we ignore Johnson, we tolerate Cowper, but we love Goldsmith. Really, when we come to consider the whole question of the place occupied by English poets in the affections of their readers, we are led to wonder if the position of Goldsmith is not absolutely unique. The poets since Shakespeare have not made themselves beloved—the majority in the eighteenth century seem to have aimed at making themselves hated, and to have achieved their object without much trouble. When we lay down Pope with a gasp of admiration for his diabolical wit and his genius for flagellation in couplets, we feel inclined to be just as enthusiastic in respect of his power as we would be over the dexterous performance of an adept with the cat-o'-nine-tails. The whistle of the whipcord is in the first line of every couplet, and the flip upon the flesh winds up the second. The six dozen at the grating of the old man-o'-war with the ship's band playing faultless music all the time—that is what we think of when we read Pope's finest satires. The performance makes no call upon our affections. No doubt when Apollo was flaying Marsyas he lightened his labour with a song; but enraptured though the audience must have

been by his vocalism, the general effect could not but be lessened by the feeling that the satyr was suffering considerable uneasiness. Apollo tore off the flesh to the sound of his own divine music; but he made no appeal to the affections in the act, though it was referred to with enthusiasm, not by Marsyas, but others, when it became a Topic and an Allegory. Pope wrote of man as a god writing of men, Goldsmith as a man writing of men.

And what of the others of the seed of Dryden who made up the twelve tribes of poesy in the eighteenth century? Did any one of them make himself beloved by anything he wrote? Well, it seems to us that the dispersal of the tribes took place before any one of them had time to assert its claim to autonomy, and only two remained to be reckoned with: the priestly Lèvi, represented by Young and his friends, and the kingly Judah, represented by Pope and his followers. Most of the others, previous to the great dispersal effected by Time, seem to have merged into one ragged regiment stumbling and staggering into obscurity under the ensign of Issachar. But the most nobly didactic made no more appeal to the affections than did the most polished of the satirists. Even without forgetting that Burns must be included among the poets of the eighteenth century, we may repeat that Goldsmith alone is entitled to be regarded as the poet whom we love.

And he was the writer of the novel which unquestionably is the best loved in the language. It is no matter whether *The Vicar of Wakefield* is the best novel in the language or the second best, it is the best loved, and the best deserving of being loved. Every character that appears in its pages has become our friend, down to the very villain, who only in the last lines is rescued from infamy by the author's kindness of heart in making him work out his scheme of true repentance through the medium of the French horn. The same may be said of the comedies, *The Good-Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*. There is not a character in either of them that we do not love, and whom, if it were possible for our friends in fiction to pass from us as do our dearest ones in life, we would not as sorely miss. In Goldsmith's other imaginative writings, among which we may include the greater part of his *History of the*

Earth and Animated Nature, the same endearing qualities may be found without much searching. His essays and sketches also abound in such happy touches of sympathy with the foibles of mankind and such unostentatious toleration of the weaknesses of rogues as tend to good fellowship, and prevent us from having any difficulty in accounting for his holding the place he does in our hearts. Some one who knew him tolerably well affirmed that he was never otherwise than a child. We feel that that description was a true one. He holds the place of a child in the household of authorship, and we feel that we would much rather part with a score of adults than with him.

This is the Oliver Goldsmith whom we know through his works, and we think that the man himself cannot have been different. But when we read some accounts of him, transmitted to us by a few of his contemporaries, we are amazed to find that we are mistaken in our assumption. We are told that he was a vain empty coxcomb, so overwhelmed with self-conceit that he could not hear without envy of the success of another man, no matter in what direction it was achieved—that he was ungrateful to those who had befriended him most—that he was an accomplished liar, a contemptible braggart, an undutiful son, and a bit of a hypocrite into the bargain. He was a plagiarist when he was at his best, and a fool when he was at his worst. He affected a wisdom to which he had no claim, and a learning which he did not possess. He only failed to be an impostor because of his want of ability to frame any scheme that would impose upon the most credulous of humanity. We find, in short, that the man Goldsmith was in every respect exactly the opposite to Goldsmith the writer.

"Impossible!" we cry; but what signifies a protest when Boswell is against us? And it is to Boswell we are indebted for a curiously circumstantial account of Goldsmith the man, every word of which justifies our taking the most sombre view of his character; and when Boswell has been quoted it is generally assumed that the last word has been said on any matter incidental to the eighteenth century. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* has been more widely read and more implicitly believed than all the books on the eighteenth century put together. We are daily assured that it is the

greatest biographical work that exists in any language. Concerning Goldsmith we have the testimony of this greatest of biographers that "He had sagacity enough to cultivate assiduously the acquaintance of Johnson, and his faculties were gradually enlarged by the contemplation of such a model. To me and many others," continues Mr. Boswell, "it appeared that he studiously copied the manner of Johnson, though indeed upon a smaller scale. . . . No man had the art of displaying with more advantage as a writer whatever literary acquisitions he made. . . . His mind resembled a fertile but thin soil. No deep root could be struck. The oak of the forest did not grow there; but the elegant shrubbery and the fragrant parterre appeared in gay succession. It has been generally circulated and believed that he was a mere fool in conversation; but in truth this has been greatly exaggerated."

So strongly does Mr. Boswell feel the injurious effect which this exaggeration is likely to produce upon such people as might be interested in the personal character of Goldsmith, that he hastens to prevent the possibility of any one being so unjust to Goldsmith as to fancy that he had anything of the fool about him. This is how he pleads for Goldsmith:

"He had no doubt a more than common share of that hurry of ideas, which we often find in his countrymen and which sometimes produces a laughable confusion in expressing them. He was very much what the French call *un étourdi*, and from vanity and an eager desire of being conspicuous wherever he was, he frequently talked carelessly without knowledge of the subject, or even without thought. His person was short, his countenance coarse and vulgar, his deportment that of a scholar awkwardly affecting the easy gentleman. Those who were in any way distinguished excited envy in him to so ridiculous an excess that the instances of it are hardly credible. When accompanying two beautiful young ladies and their mother on a tour in France, he was seriously angry that more attention was paid to them than to him; and once at the exhibition of the Fantoccini in London, when those who sat next to him observed with what dexterity a puppet was made to toss a pike, he could not bear

that it should have such praise, and exclaimed with some warmth: 'Pshaw! I can do it better myself.' He, I am afraid," continues Mr. Boswell—and we see the eyes of the unctuous Scotsman raised from his manuscript as he makes the sorrowful record—"I am afraid"—and we see him shake his head in melancholy retrospect—"He, I am afraid" —and we hear his sigh as he at last brings himself to the point of setting down the mournful truth—"had no settled system of any sort, so that his conduct must not be strictly scrutinised; but his affections were social and generous, and when he had money he gave it away very liberally. His desire of imaginary consequence predominated over his attention to truth. When he began to rise into notice, he said he had a brother who was Dean of Durham, a fiction so easily detected that it was wonderful how he should have been so inconsiderate as to hazard it. He boasted to me at this time of the power of his pen in commanding money, which I believe was true in a certain degree, though in the instance he gave he was by no means correct. He told me that he had sold a novel for four hundred pounds. This was his *Vicar of Wakefield.* But Johnson informed me that he had made the bargain for Goldsmith and that the price was sixty pounds. 'And, sir,' said he, 'a sufficient price too, when it was sold, for then the fame of Goldsmith had not been elevated, as it afterwards was by his *Traveller*, and the bookseller had such faint hopes of profit by his bargain that he kept the manuscript by him a long time and did not publish it till after *The Traveller* had appeared. Then, to be sure, it was accidentally worth more money.'"

Boswell then describes his supping with Goldsmith and Johnson at the "Mitre," and mentions that Goldsmith's respectful attachment to Johnson was then at its height, "for his own literary reputation had not yet distinguished him so much as to excite a vain desire of competition with his great master"; but it would seem that he was not quite repressed by such a consideration, for we are told that he attempted to maintain, "I suppose from an affectation of paradox," Boswell says, "that knowledge was not desirable on its own account, for it often was a source of unhappiness." To which Johnson

replied, making one of those statements which seem to have appealed to his biographer as revelations only possible to a genius on the verge of ecstasy, "Why, sir, that knowledge may in some cases produce unhappiness, I allow. But upon the whole knowledge, *per se*, is certainly an object which every man would wish to attain, although perhaps he may not take the trouble necessary for attaining it."

Later on Boswell tells us how Goldsmith endeavoured to mortify him by strutting before him, and calling out, with an air of superiority "like that of an esoteric over an exoteric disciple of a sage of antiquity, 'I go to Miss Williams!'" Miss Williams being one of the bickering mendicant crew to whom the benevolent Johnson gave house room. A short time after his unworthy, if successful, attempt to arouse a passion of envy in the breast of Boswell, a just judgment fell upon Goldsmith, for he himself felt the gnawings of this monster at his vitals. It was upon the occasion of Johnson's first narration of the interview which he had with the King. All the time that the former was describing the moving incidents of that memorable five minutes, we hear that:

"Dr. Goldsmith remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Dr. Johnson had lately enjoyed."

Happily, however, he at last succeeded in at least concealing his mortification. "He sprung from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, 'Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it.'"

II

Respecting the extraordinary vanity of Goldsmith, Boswell gives us many anecdotes. Upon one occasion when he was wearing a "bloom-coloured" coat, he "strutted about bragging of his dress, and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions. . . . 'Let me tell you [said Goldsmith], when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat he said, "Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When any body asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to remember John Filby at the Harrow in Water Lane!"'" Whereupon Johnson, who had doubtless been thinking over this ponderous matter, said, "Why, sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour."

Quite a plausible explanation of Mr. Filby's appeal, but posterity has been perturbed by the absence of any information as to whether or not it satisfied Goldsmith.

Then respecting Goldsmith's constant desire to shine in company without possessing any qualification for doing so, Boswell gives Johnson's opinion.

"Sir, he is so much afraid of being unnoticed that he often talks merely lest you should forget that he is in the company." Boswell agreed with him, but being very fond of Goldsmith would only go so far as to allow that he "stood forward." "True, sir," said Johnson, "but if a man is to stand forward he should wish to do it, not in an awkward posture, not in rags, not so as that he shall only be exposed to ridicule." But Boswell's love for Goldsmith would not stand this. "For my part I like very well to hear honest Goldsmith talk away carelessly," he boldly affirmed, for if Boswell had a fault at all it was to be found in his recklessness in standing up for his friend, whether his friend "stood forward" or not. Possibly it was because Johnson perceived this that he wound up the discussion by saying simply, "Why, yes, sir; but he should not like to hear himself."

It would seem to most people not fully acquainted with Mr. Boswell's methods that, considering how coldly his defence of the weaknesses of his friend Goldsmith was received by Johnson, the topic would have been best kept out of sight; but it would not have been like Mr. Boswell to make an effort in this direction. As a matter of fact it appeared as if he had only to find out a topic that grated upon Johnson to encourage him to recur to it at every spare moment. When the topic was the foible of a friend, Johnson's treatment of it was termed "goring" by Boswell, and to do Johnson justice he was seldom lethargic when his tormentor flaunted a crimson topic in front of him. His horns were usually ready at the "charge," though occasionally when he had enough of it he got home upon Boswell and sent him into the nearest ditch. But the toreador soon was on his feet again, and after wiping off the mud, resumed the attack as if nothing had happened.

"I told him that Goldsmith had said to me a few days before, 'as I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the tailor, so I take my religion from the priest,'" Mr. Boswell informs us, adding, naturally, how deeply he regretted this loose way of talking, and Johnson tried to calm him by saying:

"Sir, he knows nothing; he has made up his mind about nothing."

A few days later Johnson was prodded into the arena again and affirmed that it was amazing how little Goldsmith knew: "He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else." Considering that he was so constantly in the company of Johnson and Boswell this was only to be expected. But Sir Joshua Reynolds could not help thinking that in these circumstances it was rather strange that there was no man whose company was more liked. But Johnson (according to Boswell) had no difficulty in showing that this very fact bore out his contention. "To be sure, sir, when people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer their inferior while he is with them, it is most gratifying to them."

So much for the social attractiveness of Goldsmith's extraordinary fund of ignorance. Unhappily he had no

opportunity of gratifying the company in the way Johnson indicated, upon the occasion of a dinner given by the brothers Dilly in the Poultry; but that was because the company included such a galaxy of brilliant men as Boswell, Johnson, Langton, a Mr. Claxton, the Reverend Dr. Mayo, and the Reverend Mr. Toplady, who, Mr. Augustine Birrell, in an illuminating footnote in his edition of Boswell, tells us was the author of *Rock of Ages*. It would be absurd to imagine such a company gratified to find themselves in the presence of any one more ignorant than themselves. But the fact was that they were so busy displaying their own ignorance, Goldsmith had not a look in, so to speak. He had not even a chance of hinting to the Reverend Mr. Toplady his ignorance of the fact, well known to the Reverend Mr. Toplady, that the words "blood" and "flowed" are rhymes and also "cure" and "power."

The conversation which Goldsmith was kept out of had a wide range. It began by Johnson's placing his veto upon exploration in the South Seas, by affirming that, as there were twenty thousand species of insects in Great Britain already, there was no need for explorers to go abroad for entomological research; and then the conversation passed on to the question of the migration of birds, in the course of which some more cocksure ignorance was displayed by these *savants*. But when Mr. Boswell, who was never very adroit in joining his flats, started an inconsequential discussion upon Otaheite and the bread-fruit tree, Johnson's wisdom was equal to the strain put upon it, and he affirmed, holding up a slice of a good loaf, that no bread tree could touch that. He went further and declared that "all ignorant savages will laugh when they are told of the advantages of civilised life." Back again to ornithology the talkers in the company went, and the only remark with the smallest approach to erudition in it came from Goldsmith; on then to the topic of toleration, introduced with great tact by the banderillero Boswell: he saw that there were Dissenters at the table and he knew well what Johnson thought of these gentry. The dart he flung went home, and Johnson tossed the Reverend Dr. Mayo and his associates sky high; and once again Goldsmith introduced a phrase of reason into the play of verbiage; but according to

Boswell, he was not satisfied. but "sat in restless agitation, from a wish to get in and shine . . . he had taken his hat to go away, but remained for some time with it in his hand, like a gamester who at the close of a long night lingers for a little while to see if he can have a favourable opening to finish with success. Once when he was beginning to speak, he found himself overpowered by the loud voice of Johnson who was at the opposite end of the table, and did not perceive Goldsmith's attempt. Thus disappointed of his wish to obtain the attention of the company, Goldsmith in a passion threw down his hat, looking angrily at Johnson and exclaiming in a bitter voice: '*Take it!*'" The narrator gives us no hint of what he meant by this exclamation "*Take it!*" Take what? One has a vague notion that Mr. Boswell somehow associated the act with the throwing down of the gauntlet of the champion, or perhaps, considering the nationality of Goldsmith, with the trailing of a coat with a tail that might be trodden on. His omission in this respect rather tends to neutralise the force of the exclamation. However, Goldsmith had soon an opportunity of venting his own envy and spleen under the pretext of supporting another person. "Toplady was beginning to speak, when Johnson made a sound which Goldsmith fancied was an interruption, and he remarked to Johnson: 'Sir, the gentleman has heard you patiently for an hour, pray allow us now to hear him.' 'Sir,' said Johnson sternly, 'I was not interrupting the gentleman, I was only giving him a signal of my attention. Sir, you are impertinent.'" Goldsmith made no reply, and Johnson spoke for another hour on the doctrine of the Trinity, and on the impiety of introducing such a topic in a mixed company.

Later on Johnson, with a wink at his friends, apologised to Goldsmith, who had been brooding over the insult; and Goldsmith, without a wink, said placidly, "It must be much from you, sir, that I take ill."

"In our way to the club," Boswell adds, "I regretted that Goldsmith would upon every occasion endeavour to shine, by which he often exposed himself, observing that 'Goldsmith had a great deal of gold in his cabinet, but not content with that was always taking out his purse.'

'Yes, sir,' said Johnson, 'and that so often an empty purse.'"

Numerous instances Boswell gives of this extraordinary desire to shine on the part of Goldsmith, and clearly shows that the latter had actually somehow acquired the idea that he had a right to make a remark in the presence of Johnson. "One evening, in a circle of wits"—the narrator was of course the centre of this magic circle—"he found fault with me for talking of Johnson as entitled to the honour of unquestionable superiority. 'Sir,' said he, 'you are for making a monarchy of what should be a republic!'"

Again and again Boswell returned to this charge. The jealousy and envy which Goldsmith bore toward Boswell was constantly making itself manifest, and Johnson affirmed, when Boswell pleaded for him with true Boswellian generosity, that one did well to be angry with a man who had such a superabundance of an odious quality. And so the great biographer goes on even after the death of Goldsmith, losing no opportunity of showing him in an unfavourable light and of quoting Johnson's cordial concurrence with his own views regarding the odiousness of the man—in fact, as we have shown, he puts himself forward upon some occasions as pleading hard with Johnson to be more tolerant to "honest Dr. Goldsmith"— and the result is that, as "Boswell" only wants the change of a few insignificant consonants to spell "Gospel" to ninety-nine out of every hundred readers nowadays, people begin to be rather ashamed of allowing themselves to have an affection for so unworthy an object as Goldsmith. When they speak of Goldsmith apart from his books they invariably assume an indulgent tone—a sort of kindly compassionate tone, with the smile and the shake of the head which accompany the reference to a good-natured empty-headed scamp.

The difference between the treatment of Johnson and Goldsmith by modern readers is that, while Johnson the man is held in high esteem, Johnson the writer is referred to apologetically; whereas Goldsmith the writer is accepted with enthusiasm and Goldsmith the man is dismissed with the exclamation with which Washington Irving concludes his sketch of his life, "Poor Goldsmith!"

In each case the result is wholly due to the testimony of

Boswell; and this testimony is regarded by ex-statesmen and people of that sort, as so unimpeachable that even those students of the eighteenth century who might reasonably be expected to have some power of discrimination, seem to be content to accept Boswell's valuation of Oliver Goldsmith as correct; at least no protest came from any quarter at the ludicrous design of a recent statue of James Boswell, in which the figure of Goldsmith appears as one of the supporters of the effigy of the man who tried only too successfully to heap contempt upon his memory.

But perhaps the artist had a more subtle sense of what was appropriate than that with which one might be disposed at first to accredit him. Perhaps he meant his design to be figurative of the attitude of Goldsmith, as well as of the posture of Boswell. Boswell climbed into his place upon the shoulders of his more distinguished friends, and Goldsmith never was so happy as when he was trying to help others into better circumstances. Johnson, in a letter to his own biographer three months after Goldsmith's death, asked: "Was ever poet so trusted before?" "Never," is the answer that would have been returned by any one acquainted with Goldsmith and the extent of his benefactions. All the needy human beings who approached him trusted him to relieve their necessities, no matter how forlorn his own condition might be. "Was ever poet so trusted before?" We think not.

III

We have just given it as our opinion that everything contained in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* has recently come to be accepted by the multitude as absolutely accurate—almost painfully accurate—inartistically accurate—unnecessarily accurate. When Boswell gets quite warm in denouncing the absence of scrupulous accuracy in others, he naturally causes his readers to believe the more implicitly every statement made by himself. But it is plain that there is a considerable difference between accuracy of statement and accuracy of judgment. When Boswell assures us that Goldsmith made a fool of himself every time he opened his mouth, that he was consumed by envy, that his life was embittered by his jealousy of others,

that he was constantly boasting of achievements which were altogether imaginary, and of the dizzy heights of ecclesiastical dignity reached by fictitious relations of his, we may, if we wish, be satisfied with his intention to tell what he himself believes to be strictly true; and yet, unless we have confidence in his ability to pronounce an impartial judgment on such points, his statements are valueless to us. The question that has to be decided is this: Was Boswell qualified to pronounce the opinion that he did pronounce in respect of the nature and the character of Goldsmith? Was he qualified to sift such evidence as was brought under his notice bearing upon the character of Goldsmith?

Now, before attempting to consider the question as to whether or not he ever wilfully suppressed for his own purposes pieces of evidence of which he was fully cognisant in writing of certain people, and the question as to whether or not he suppressed portions of certain conversations which he purported to record in full, and certain incidents which tended to throw new light upon the characters of the persons to whom he was referring—before attempting to consider these particular questions, we will try to arrive at some conclusion as to the qualifications of Boswell to pronounce any opinion upon the character of Goldsmith.

Now it cannot be pretended for a moment that Boswell was the equal in intellect or intellectual achievement of any of the brilliant circle into which he contrived to thrust himself. The only ground upon which he could possibly base a claim to be admitted to the society of men of distinction was his liking for the society of such men and the possession of such a spirit of determination as could not but enable him to surmount every obstacle that threatened to impede his progress toward the distinction of being in the company of the distinguished. Happily he had cultivated those qualities without which the most persevering spirit would have availed him nothing. A youth spent among the sturdy free-speaking inhabitants of the Lowlands of Scotland, with an occasional excursion into the Highlands, afforded him an excellent training for the career which he chose for himself. These "dour" countrymen of his do not mince their words, whether they are criticising their lairds or their lairds' sons,

and it may be taken for granted that "Auld Auchinleck" the law lord, who was his father, had himself a complete mastery over the local idioms of a raucous, but terribly expressive, tongue. A year or two of such an experience must have acted upon young Boswell as certain chemical processes act upon iron, producing what is technically known as "case hardening." When one has submitted to the frank criticisms of the Scots he can "thole" anything, and there is every reason to believe that "Jamie" was insult-proof before he ever started life in England Any one with his aspirations had need to be, as he soon found out.

But he seems never to have distrusted his qualifications for success in the *rôle* which he undertook to play, and in which he became eminent. He had many escapades from which he emerged if not notorious at least on the verge of notoriety. One of his earliest adventures was associated with the celebrated law-suit known as the Douglas Cause. All Scotland was talking of the case, and while it was yet *sub judice*, young Mr. Boswell, whose father was actually on the Bench and about to deliver his judgment, thought the moment an opportune one for publishing a novel, which was so transparent a reproduction of the particular incidents referred to in the course of the trial, that an application was actually made for the committal of the author for contempt of court. He had had the effrontery to include in one chapter the decision of the judges in favour of the side to which he was attached. For this flagrant attempt to bias the course of justice he narrowly escaped imprisonment.

But the notoriety which he gained for a time must have more than compensated him for the risk which he ran, and perhaps even for the subsequent interview which he had with "Auld Auchinleck" on the subject.

Later he made a further advance by espousing the cause of Corsica, which was then in the throes of a revolution. He became again cheaply notorious by appearing in London in the national costume of the island, and visiting the Prime Minister so arrayed. Some time afterwards he attained the distinction of being caricatured under the name of "Corsica Boswell." Perhaps it was the recollection of this escapade

that caused him to feel pained at the lack of taste shown by Goldsmith in wearing a coat that made him rather conspicuous among his associates.

So this ingenious young Scotsman pushed his way onward toward his goal, forcing himself into the company of the great and refusing to accept their repulses as final. He must have had many a check in those days when the great ones were protected in their fastnesses by a bodyguard of lackeys, and so were not easily accessible even to the most pertinacious of their worshippers. But he had his moments of triumph even then, for he was accustomed to snatch in the pit of the theatre a laurel which was denied to him elsewhere. Going early to the playhouse before the curtain was rung up on the legitimate performers, he won a certain reputation for himself by the exercise of his solitary accomplishment, which was the imitation of various animals of the farmyard. It seems that he showed great ability as an exponent of the emotional moments of ruminants; but his success was more marked in sounding the rather restricted diapason of the cow than of any other quadruped in his repertory; though we should be cautious before coming to a conclusion on this point solely on the evidence which Sir Walter Scott had at his command, to the effect that a countryman of the amateur in the pit called out when he varied his *rôle*, "Stick to the coo, mon, stick to the coo!"

And then came the happy day when Tom Davies, whose shop Mr. Boswell was accustomed to frequent on the chance of having a word with some of the great men for whose society he yearned, ventured to introduce him to Dr. Johnson. Within five minutes Johnson had insulted him; but he refused to be snubbed. He had become too well accustomed to that sort of thing to feel mortified simply because the great exponent of intoleration had told him not to interfere with what did not concern him. He asked Johnson's pardon and humbly begged permission to wait upon him. The great man accepted his homage, and Boswell showed that he knew how to make the most of the opportunity that he saw was at hand. He waited upon Johnson the next day and from that day onward. Reluctantly at first, but afterwards with complacency, Johnson brought him within the

charmed circle of his acquaintance, and Boswell took very good care never to stray far beyond its circumference.

There can be no doubt whatever that his presence was resented by many of the distinguished circle.

"Who is that cur that is always following at Johnson's heels?" some one inquired one day.

"He is not a cur," replied Goldsmith, "he is only a bur that Tom Davies threw at Johnson as a jest and he has stuck to him ever since."

It is certain that for years the position occupied by Boswell in the Johnson circle was that of a butt for the exercise of the wits. That really seemed to be the place which he was meant to occupy in life. He was a small man, talkative, and tactless and tasteless. He had never any sense of self-respect, and he had never any perception of what was ludicrous. He never knew when he was being laughed at, and when he himself had made a commonplace remark, he recorded it as if it were a witticism. Goldsmith said of Johnson's wit, quoting from a play of Congreve's, that when his pistol missed fire, he knocked his opponent down with the butt. Of Boswell it might have been said that when his pistol flashed in the pan he believed that he had fired off a solid bullet.

He affords us in the course of his *magnum opus* many instances of the truth of this. We need only give one, however, in this place. It will be remembered that, when he was maintaining to Goldsmith the superiority of Johnson to Burke as a talker, Goldsmith said, "Can he (Johnson) wind round a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" and Boswell records with triumph his reply, "Yes, sir, but Johnson is the Hercules who strangled serpents in his cradle." Surely a more perfect example of ineptitude was never recorded against any man.

But while he gives us in this way plenty of evidence of his own qualifications to be made a butt of by the many brilliant people with whom he came in contact, he is somewhat reticent on the subject of their witticism at his expense, and small blame attaches to him on this account. He was under no obligation to the readers of his *Life of Johnson* to make them aware of the ridicule of which he was the

object. Only when he was brow-beaten and insulted by Johnson does he become communicative. He had that elementary sense of art which enabled him to perceive that it is impossible for a tennis player to show his skill in the absence of a ball. He was quite content to play the part of the ball to Johnson's racket. Not a little of the admiration which he has obtained during recent years is due to the fact that he impresses us with a sense of his scrupulousness as a narrator of facts, since he does not hesitate to acquaint us with the particulars of Johnson's wit at his expense. But it really was not until he was exasperated beyond the endurance of the most patient of men, which Johnson was not, that Johnson flung himself upon him, not administering to him a dignified rebuke, but treating him as the "rogue" elephant treats his keeper—knocking him down and kneeling on his body or flinging him contemptuously into a ditch, trumpeting in his wrath.

Boswell is delightfully frank in his narration of the details of such scenes; but it will be noticed that nearly all that he records were "cabinet" scenes; Johnson and he are nearly always alone; he does not hint that Johnson ridiculed him in public. His marvellous memory has been as greatly praised as his extraordinary accuracy, but his memory seems to have strangely failed him in respect of a very interesting scene, which took place at the Thrales' house at Streatham upon the occasion of the first visit of Fanny Burney to that celebrated mansion; but Miss Burney kept a diary and wrote letters. She gives us in her Memoirs a circumstantial account of the "collation" at which Boswell, Johnson, and others were present.

"Mr. Boswell," we are told, "had a strong Scotch accent, though by no means strong enough to make him unintelligible to an English ear. He had an odd mock solemnity of tone and manner that he had acquired unconsciously from constantly thinking of, and imitating, Johnson. There was also something slouching in the gait and dress of Mr. Boswell that ridiculously caricatured the same model. His clothes were always too large for him; his hair, or wig, was constantly in a state of negligence; and he never for a moment sat still or upright in his chair. Every look

and movement betrayed either intentional or involuntary imitation."

"As Mr. Boswell was at Streatham only upon a morning visit, a collation was ordered, to which all were assembled. Mr. Boswell was preparing to take a seat that he seemed, by prescription, to consider as his own, next to Dr. Johnson; but Mr. Seward, who was present, waved his hand for Mr. Boswell to move farther on, saying with a smile:

"'Mr. Boswell, that seat is Miss Burney's.'

"He stared amazed: the asserted claimant was new and unknown to him, and he appeared by no means pleased to resign his prior rights. But after looking round for a minute or two, with an important air of demanding to know the meaning of the innovation, and receiving no satisfaction, he reluctantly, almost resentfully, got another chair, and placed it at the back of the shoulder of Dr. Johnson; while this new and unheard-of rival quietly seated herself, as if not hearing what was passing, for she shrank from the explanation that she feared might ensue, as she saw a smile stealing over every countenance, that of Dr. Johnson himself not excepted, at the discomfiture and surprise of Mr. Boswell.

"Mr. Boswell, however, was so situated as not to remark it in the Doctor; and of every one else, when in that presence, he was unobservant, if not contemptuous. In truth, when he met with Dr. Johnson, he commonly forebore answering anything that went forward, lest he should miss the smallest sound from that voice to which he paid such exclusive, though merited, homage. But the moment that voice burst forth, the attention which it excited in Mr. Boswell amounted almost to pain. His eyes goggled with eagerness; he leant his ear almost on the shoulder of the Doctor; and his mouth dropped open to catch every syllable that might be uttered: nay, he seemed not only to dread losing a word, but to be anxious not to miss a breathing; as if hoping from it, latently or mystically, some information.

"But when, in a few minutes, Dr. Johnson, whose eye did not follow him and who had concluded him to be at the other end of the table, said something gaily and good-humouredly, by the appellation of Bozzy, and discovered, by the sound of

the reply, that Bozzy had planted himself as closely as he could behind and between the elbows of the new usurper and his own, the Doctor turned angrily round upon him, and clapping his hand rather loudly upon his knee, said, in a tone of displeasure: 'What do you do there, sir? Go to the table, sir!'

"Mr. Boswell instantly, and with an air of affright, obeyed; and there was something so unusual in such humble submission to so imperious a command, that another smile gleamed its way across every mouth, except that of the Doctor and Mr. Boswell, who now, very unwillingly, took a distant seat.

"But ever restless when not at the side of Dr. Johnson, he presently recollected something that he wished to exhibit; and, hastily rising, was running away in its search, when the Doctor, calling after him, authoritatively said: 'What are you thinking of, sir? Why do you get up before the cloth is removed?—Come back to your place, sir!'

"Again, and with equal obsequiousness, Mr. Boswell did as he was bid; when the Doctor, pursing his lips not to betray rising risibility, muttered half to himself: 'Running about in the middle of meals! One would take you for a Branghton.'

"'A Branghton, sir?' repeated Mr. Boswell, with earnestness; 'what is a Branghton, sir?'

"'Where have you lived, sir?' cried the Doctor, laughing; 'and what company have you kept, not to know that?'

"Mr. Boswell, now doubly curious, yet always apprehensive of falling into some disgrace with Dr. Johnson, said, in a low tone, which he knew the Doctor could not hear, to Mrs. Thrale: 'Pray, ma'am, what's a Branghton? Do me the favour to tell me! Is it some animal hereabouts?'

"Mrs. Thrale only laughed heartily, but without answering as she saw one of her guests uneasily fearful of an explanation. But Mr. Seward cried: 'I'll tell you, Boswell—I'll tell you!—if you will walk with me into the paddock; only let us wait till the table is cleared, or I shall be taken for a Branghton too!'

"They soon went off together; and Mr. Boswell, no doubt, was fully informed of the road that had led to the usurpation by which he had thus been annoyed."

Now this brilliant little sketch indicates pretty clearly,

we think, the fact that Johnson was as ready as any of the rest of his circle to cast ridicule upon Boswell in public as well as in private. It would not have been like Johnson to discriminate in this respect. He admitted that he liked what is nowadays called "a gallery," and always played up to it. Who can doubt that he admitted the companionship of Boswell through the artistic sense of the value of a background?

There is no avoiding the fact that Boswell was regarded by Johnson and his associates as a highly ridiculous person. He is never referred to by his contemporaries as a man whose judgment was worth anything; and the publication of his *Life of Johnson* confirmed the impression which a personal acquaintance with him had produced. Had he ever found himself in such a situation as allowed of his expressing an opinion upon the character of such a man as Oliver Goldsmith, he would have been regarded as a presumptuous charlatan by the few who might take him seriously, but by the great majority of his acquaintance his opinion would certainly have been accepted as a joke to convulse the coffee houses and be passed on from the "Mitre" in Fleet Street to the "Bear" in St. James's Street.

IV

But surely we need no further evidence of the incapacity of Boswell to discriminate upon any question of character or ability, than may be derived from the instances he gives upon which his conclusions were founded. He assures us that Goldsmith was always endeavouring to shine in company, but that he possessed no qualification for shining. Now if he had had any sense he would have stopped there; but he was unwise enough to quote Goldsmith's attempts, and that is just where he made the mistake; for every one must allow that the instances he gives of Goldsmith's conversation are distinctly the most brilliant of any that he records. The incredible nonsense which is gravely chronicled by Boswell is only relieved by the sensible, the apt, the humourous, or the witty interpolations of Goldsmith. Not a single instance of Goldsmith's stupidity given by Boswell produces any other impression than that the stupidity was not on Goldsmith's side. He gives no instance of Johnson's having an argument

with Goldsmith in which the latter failed to get the best of it. Boswell was alone in believing the contrary.

What is the value of the judgment of a person whose faculty of discrimination is exercised only to induce conviction of just the opposite to his contention? We might have taken Goldsmith's stupidity for granted were it not for the means adopted by his critic to force it upon us.

So much for Boswell's testimony on the subject of Goldsmith's incapacity to take the place which such a man might reasonably be expected to occupy in the company of such intellects as had made him their friend. But when we have become suspicious of the biographer's capacity to judge on this point, we refuse to accept without further consideration the reference to his other failings made on the same authority. For instance, that circumstantial account already referred to which he gave of Goldsmith being extremely angry because of the obvious attention paid by some officers at Lille to the two charming young women and their equally charming young mother, who had chosen him to be their travelling companion on a trip to France—is not that story worth the curious consideration of any one anxious to learn the truth about that remarkable Irishman Oliver Goldsmith?

The first question that we are disposed to ask is probably that which the observant French officers asked:

"Que diable fait il dans cette galère?"

How did it come that that awkward Irish lout found himself in the company of three of the handsomest and most fastidious Englishwomen of the century? Of their beauty there luckily can be no question. The faces of the Horneck sisters have excited the admiration of the world for more than a hundred years—ever since Reynolds painted them side by side in one picture and then on separate canvasses. They were exquisite creatures belonging to a good family, and they were admitted to the best society in England. Their brother, who was in the Guards, married the daughter of a peer, and they themselves made good matches. How did it come that such persons of taste and fashion chose so silly and contemptible a companion as the Goldsmith of Boswell, when they took their excursion to France?

That is one mystery which Boswell made no attempt to

explain, and which certainly admits of no explanation on any basis of fact suggested by him.

But, neglecting that question for the moment, one naturally inquires if the narrator of the story was present at the scene which he describes, and if not, on whose authority did he give the story? Obviously it must have come in the first instance from one of the ladies of the party. But immediately after its publication in Boswell's *Life*, one of these ladies wrote denying its accuracy and affirming that, so far from Goldsmith's having been affected in the way stated by Boswell, he had made a jest of the incident, and that no one could ever have imagined from the way Goldsmith treated it that he was serious.

After reading this "disclaimer" we begin to have an inkling of Boswell's methods and to entertain the gravest suspicion of his honesty. If we do not, we are compelled to accept the only alternative explanation of these stories of his about Goldsmith, and this is that Boswell was the dupe of some humourist who knew that no incident was too ridiculous for him to accept as the truth or too extravagant for him to record.

As for the tale which he says he had from a "dignitary of the church," whose name, by the way, he was careful to conceal, though there was no reason why he should do so, that Goldsmith had boasted to the said "dignitary" of the Dean of Durham being his uncle, it is surely not worth a second thought. One has to go to a creation of Goldsmith himself to find a parallel to this absurdity. "If you mind him, he'll persuade you that his mother was an alderman and his aunt a justice of peace," says Tony Lumpkin. We wonder that Boswell does not give us a story of Goldsmith's boasting that his mother was an alderman. The idea of his telling a dignitary of the church of all people in the world that the Dean of Durham was his uncle would not be more childish. Only an imbecile, which certainly Goldsmith was not, would be guilty of telling a falsehood to the most likely person in the world to detect its inaccuracy; and Boswell's accepting such a story even on the evidence of the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, suggests a want of judgment unmatched except by Boswell himself. Possibly what did happen was that Gold-

smith made a remark to the dignitary of the church that he himself had many close connections with the church, his father, brother, and uncle being clergymen, and his cousin being Dean of Cloyne. That Boswell should think it necessary to tell the other story only suggests his difficulty in finding evidence sufficient to sustain his contention as to Goldsmith's boasting. The same may be said of his story of Goldsmith's having told him that he had sold a novel for four hundred pounds. Why should he have been such a fool, knowing that Boswell had only to ask Johnson, who had done the selling, the sum that he had received?

Why should the man who could truthfully boast of making £500 out of a play brag of having received £100 less for a work six times as long? That is what Boswell does not tell us.

It is not, however, until Mr. Boswell gives us the tale of Goldsmith's swelling in pride, strutting in front of him like a Gilray caricature of Prince Orgoglio, because of his going to drink tea with the peevish old woman whose affliction necessitated her finding out a way of preventing the cups from being filled to overflowing, that he reaches the *reductio ad absurdum* in his instances of Goldsmith's boastfulness. It might be fancied that his own acquaintance with the fact that Mrs. Williams' tea was flavoured with Mrs. Williams' finger-tips would have prompted him to pause before writing of Goldsmith's exhibition of pride at being so dubiously privileged as to be this lady's guest. But he frankly admits that Goldsmith's boastfulness stung him deeply, since he himself had not been invited to the entertainment, and this confession is illuminating. It lets us see at once what was in his mind, not merely at that incautious moment, but upon other occasions when he jotted down something to the detriment of a man or woman to whom Johnson showed favour.

Hitherto we have been assuming that Boswell wrote of Goldsmith according to his lights; we have only pointed out how indiscriminating was his judgment—how badly qualified he was to pronounce an opinion upon the character of the man whom he assailed, and how even the evidence which he brings forward in support of his contentions proves just the opposite to what he meant to prove. We have not yet con-

sidered the question as to whether or not Boswell wrote in good faith according to his lights respecting Oliver Goldsmith.

It may be pointed out that, while he said a great deal against Goldsmith, he said much in his favour, and recorded Johnson's doing the same. Such a contention is certainly a reasonable one to advance in defence of Boswell; but when it is looked into, the result will be, we think, to confirm the opinion which was very freely expressed upon the *Life* when it first appeared. The work was received with derision by those who were most competent to pronounce an opinion upon it, and the writer was treated with such contempt that he was practically ostracised. His judgments upon his contemporaries were ridiculed by critics who were acquainted with the persons, and the opinions which he had put in the mouth of Johnson were denounced as slanders. Horace Walpole, writing immediately after the appearance of the book, protested against the atrocious form of publishing a libel, attributing it to a person who was dead and so could not be proceeded against. But the general feeling that seemed to prevail in England was that the book was too ridiculous to be treated seriously. It was thoroughly ridiculed, and the nonsense pages attributed to Johnson—the nonsense which Johnson is made to talk, the commonplaceness of the conversation solemnly recorded, and the foolishness of the criticisms attributed to him were made the subject of parodies innumerable, some of them of quite exceptional merit. But the malice of the writer was everywhere accepted as obvious. He was regarded as a mean, petty libeller who had sought to pay off old grudges through the medium of a biography of a great man.

And what was the effect upon Boswell of this criticism by his contemporaries? He behaved as does the mean man who is found out. Bishop Percy, in a letter recently published in Miss Alice Gaussen's *Life* of the man who had been intimate with both Johnson and Boswell, tells us what happened. Writing in a "cautionary" way to the editor of Sir John Stonehouse's memoirs he says:

"You may not perhaps have heard of the fate of the late biographer of Johnson (Boswell) or what occasioned his death, which soon followed that publication. In consequence of

his violating the primal law of civil society in publishing a man's unreserved correspondence and unguarded conversation, he became so shunned and scouted . . . he was so studiously excluded from all decent company that he was driven into deplorable habits of drinking which speedily terminated a life that seemed formed for a long duration."

It is greatly to be feared that the evidence of this letter must be regarded as conclusive. At any rate it is well known that the Boswell family would never permit the *Life of Johnson* to be alluded to in their presence. It was regarded as an indiscretion too serious to be even so much as named among them—a skeleton which was never to have its cupboard door opened.

Of course readers of the great biography have long ago ceased to discuss whether or not the writer showed either taste, tact, or discretion in his methods; they have, as a matter of fact, so far from deploring all that Walpole deplored, stood up and called Boswell blessed for those many lapses of which he was guilty from the straight paths of the fastidious, for they recognised that, by so doing, he was able to give to the world a picture of certain phases of English life in the eighteenth century unsurpassed in virility by any that has ever been painted by a writer of the time. The enormous value of the *Life* was not appreciated during the century; hence it was criticised from quite a different standpoint from that from which we must consider it nowadays. But the danger of going to the opposite extreme of adulation has not, we think, been wholly avoided by modern critics. They have been content, we repeat, to accept everything in the *Life* as though it had the authority of a divine inspiration. Most people read the book as if it were absolutely authoritative on all matters, and in the spirit which animated the Scottish Bible student who affirmed that if the Book said that Jonah had swallowed the whale and not the whale Jonah, he would believe it without question. They do not stop to consider what manner of man he was that wrote the book, or whether or not he allowed himself to be biassed by his own feelings and his own failings when he found himself in a position to pay back certain old scores. Thus it is that

great injustice is done to the memory of several persons who had the misfortune to be Boswell's enemies, and assuredly no one has suffered more in this way than Goldsmith.

Mean, spiteful, and unscrupulous, Boswell concealed his malice with the proverbial caution of his race. He gives a casual reader the impression that his desire to tell the truth, the exact truth, and nothing but the truth is his one aim, and that no one feels more pained than himself when this truth is not wholly palatable to the people whom he names or to their friends. He really does this with amazing skill, and if we had not found out from other sources that certain persons were his enemies we should have considerable difficulty in discovering this fact from his references to them. There is Baretti, for instance. Well, no fact could be more fully established than that of the enmity existing between this man and Boswell. But one might read the whole of Johnson's *Life* without having a suspicion of it. All that one would suspect was that Baretti was an acquaintance of Johnson's, and that Johnson was benevolent enough to interest himself on his behalf when he was in danger of being hanged, but that really Johnson did not care greatly whether he was hanged or not. Boswell is very scrupulous to write nothing that would seem to be to the detriment of Baretti; but he rather more than suggests that Johnson did not think very much of him.

It will be remembered that Baretti, who had been one of Johnson's most intimate associates long before Boswell contrived to become acquainted with the great man, had, when attacked by some ruffians at night in the Haymarket, stabbed one of them when defending himself. He was tried for murder at the Old Bailey and acquitted by a jury of Englishmen, he having waived his right as an alien to a panel of aliens and Englishmen in equal numbers. He was a friend of all the distinguished men in the Johnson circle, several of whom formed themselves into a committee to give evidence on his behalf. One can easily understand how, in these circumstances, little else should be talked about than the forthcoming trial. But Boswell takes very good care that no one shall fancy that Baretti was of any particular importance. He does not even mention the fact that Baretti had acted in self-defence

against a blackguardly ruffian. He merely states that he had "stabbed a man in the street." He is, however, circumstantial in his account of his own conversation with Johnson on the night before the trial. He shows us Johnson talking on various subjects with more or less good sense—his sneering at Garrick, and making a mock of Cibber; on the callousness exhibited by criminals at Tyburn, and of the manner in which he (Johnson) meant to conduct himself on his deathbed; of the vice of Foote's mimicry, and the likelihood of his being an infidel; of the merits of Congreve, and the demerits of Shakespeare, who "Never has six lines together without a fault"; of Young's *Night Thoughts* and the fact that a decrease of chaplains meant a diminution of religion. Only a few words are devoted to the subject which must certainly have been uppermost in Johnson's mind. He makes Johnson say quite casually when speaking of "our feeling for the distresses of others," "Why, there is Baretti who is to be tried for his life to-morrow, friends have risen up for him on every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum pudding the less." And this casual remark (as if Johnson had said, "By the bye, Baretti is to be tried for murder to-morrow") reminded Boswell that he had dined with Foote, who showed him a letter in which Tom Davies had told him that he had not been able to sleep from the concern he felt on account of "this sad affair of Baretti," and in which he recommended Foote to a respectable young man who sold pickles. "Ay, sir," said Johnson, "here you have a specimen of human sympathy; a friend hanged and a cucumber pickled. We know not whether Baretti or the pickle-man has kept Davies from sleep."

Now there we have a finished example of Boswell's malicious intention. He shows himself far more willing that his readers should believe that Johnson was a coarse cynic, ridiculing the existence of all human sympathy, especially when expressed in respect of the fate of one of his oldest friends, than that they should get the impression that Baretti was of sufficient importance to interest Johnson.

His account of Johnson's indifference upon this occasion has been brought forward in some directions as a proof of the hardness of Johnson's heart; but it is nothing of the kind.

It is only a proof of the insidious way in which Boswell tried to pay off old scores. He had always detested Baretti and was heard to declare that he hoped the man would be hanged. But neither Boswell nor any one else can convince us that Johnson would spend weeks of his life discussing with Burke, Murphy, Reynolds, Goldsmith, Fitzherbert, and others how best he could bring about the acquittal of Baretti, and then at the last moment affect a cynical indifference to his fate.

In connection with the subject of Baretti Boswell takes very good care that Goldsmith shall get no credit through his association with the case. Goldsmith played the most important part of any one in helping Baretti in his hour of trouble, hurrying to his side when he was arrested and driving him to Lord Mansfield's where a successful application for bail was made. Goldsmith also gave evidence at the trial; but every word of this is carefully suppressed by Boswell. No, it would never do to make it appear that Baretti occupied any place in Johnson's affections, or that Goldsmith's evidence in what he calls "the awful Sessions house" could be worth anything. What he gives us in place of the suppressed facts is Johnson's unsuppressed admiration for the attainments of Mr. Boswell, and his advice to him to compile a folio on the antiquities of Scotland.

It is in this way that Boswell pays off old scores; and so complete a master of the art was he that a casual reader is conscious only of a sense of his straining every point in order to be fair. The art of his malice is to be found in his concealment of every malicious intention. He makes Johnson say something bitter about one of his (Boswell's) enemies, and then he quotes himself taking the part of the ill-treated person—indeed, sometimes going so far in this way as to call for a rebuke from the great man.

He exhibits himself as standing up manfully for Goldsmith, for Garrick, for Foote, for Mrs. Montague and many others when Johnson has been "down on them"; but he takes very good care that the impression which his advocacy produces upon a reader is that, though his kindness of heart prompted him to do what he could for the people, yet he had such a very bad case he had no chance of success. Another of his arts was that of the *advocatus diaboli;* he provokes Johnson to

say something stinging about a person, by starting the conversation with a silly eulogy of the person whom he is anxious to see scalped, or at least mauled; then he still ventures to differ from the Dictator, bringing forward as an example of the person's worthiness something that he knows perfectly well to be that person's weakest point, or, more frequently, some colourless virtue which is common to all mediocrity. Here he gives Johnson a chance which the latter rarely neglects. Boswell is left as Johnson once threatened to leave Foote, without a leg to stand on, and the one whose cause he affects to be championing is shown to be a dunce or a scoundrel—perhaps both. But his own good feeling and his natural kindliness of disposition force him to confide in his reader that, in spite of all Johnson said, he himself still believes that the person under discussion was really not so very bad after all.

Boswell adopted a system that worked so well as to make it unnecessary for him to say a bad word about any one. He knew exactly how to go about making Johnson say it. All that remained for him was to discharge his duty as a pained but faithful recorder of the conversation. No biographer ever approached him in skill in the exercise of his talent in this way. We have already given an excellent example of his complete mastery of an art in which by constant practice he had acquired an unenviable dexterity. When he had led Johnson on to declare that Goldsmith was an empty chatterbox, he exclaimed that for his part he was always glad to hear "honest Dr. Goldsmith talk."

And the most subtle part of his scheme for paying off Goldsmith for his presumption in allowing himself to be chosen as the cherished friend and companion of the two most charming girls in town, or it may be for having qualified to write Johnson's life—either reason would be quite sufficient for him—appears to us to be found in the care with which he avoided suggesting anything to Goldsmith's detriment on any point on which the judgment of his readers could be exercised, giving them a chance of differing from him. He was too far-seeing to chronicle a word against the *works* of "honest Dr. Goldsmith." He perceived that he had no chance of getting even with Goldsmith by sneering at *The Deserted Village*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, or *She Stoops to Conquer*;

if he had done so, or if he had chronicled Johnson's doing so, he knew very well that he and Johnson would have been set down as a pair of dunces; for these works the whole world could read and pronounce upon without the need for an illuminating word from either Johnson or his Boswell. But the man Goldsmith was quite another matter. Boswell knew that he was on safe ground in describing him as a foolish, awkward, empty lout, a prey to envy on the most insignificant pretext, and consumed by vanity on points on which vanity was inexcusable. He knew that he might deplore the laxity of Goldsmith's ethics of life and his indifference to the forms of religion, the world had no means of contradicting anything that he might say on these matters. To be sure a good many people who were intimate with Goldsmith did contradict him on all these matters, but he trusted to his show of friendliness to Goldsmith even in the face of Johnson's opposition to convince the world of his constant probity. The mistake that he made was, as we have pointed out, in referring to the silliness of Goldsmith's conversation and then in quoting the things that Goldsmith said. But that was the only mistake he made in carrying out his scheme. In the case of other people—Garrick and Foote for example—Boswell was indifferent to the fact that when he led his Samson to the pillars of his enemies and gave him the sign to demolish them, his hero was himself overwhelmed by his own act; he did not mind if Johnson's reputation as a critic or a moralist crumbled away in his hour of victory over Garrick or Percy or Robertson; but he took very good care that he ran no such risks in respect of Goldsmith; he showed Johnson thoroughly appreciative of all matters in this connection of which the world was appreciative; it was only on such points as the world knew nothing of that he recorded Johnson's depreciation of his "honest Dr. Goldsmith."

V

It cannot be said that Boswell singled out Goldsmith for treatment in the exercise of his *rôle* as *advocatus diaboli.* Garrick, Mrs. Montague, Dr. Percy, and Mrs. Thrale were also made his victims. If Goldsmith only had been

singled out for this treatment there might be some difficulty in proving that Boswell was guilty of adopting the course which we have attributed to him. But one has only to read with some attention any part of his work to become aware of the fact that he was an adept in the art of making Johnson say something that he wished him to say to the detriment of a man or woman to whom he himself owed a grudge. His conscience would not permit him to make any straightforward misstatement, if we may be allowed to use the phrase, about a person, in the name of Johnson; and so we believe that Johnson did actually say all that he attributed to him; but it will, we are sure, be perfectly plain to any one who reads his *Life* critically and not casually that, while the voice was the voice of Johnson, the sentiment was the sentiment of Boswell. Boswell jotted down only such parts of his conversation as suited his own purpose, which was to record Johnson's opinion to the detriment of the person who was presumably the subject of their conversation. His conscience was very generous on the subject of omission, though scrupulous (with lapses) in dealing with actualities. That was due to his early training.

We have already given a characteristic example of his methods in connection with the case of Baretti; and before dismissing the subject, we may give another in which Garrick was the victim. Boswell hated Garrick, the reason probably being that that supreme *farceur* in private availed himself of innumerable opportunities of imitating Boswell's imitation of Johnson—he could do it when Boswell was standing by and only dimly aware, by the laughter of the people about him, that anything particular was going on. Possibly to the day of his death he never knew exactly why his friends were convulsed when Garrick and he were perhaps engaged in what he believed to be a serious conversation; but in the course of time he had a vague feeling that he was being made a fool of. He had his revenge. His turn came, and he paid off his old scores with interest. He was constantly forcing Garrick as a topic upon Johnson, and the result is that the idea that Johnson detested Garrick and failed to appreciate him as an actor is pretty firmly established.

"I complained," Boswell says, "that he had not mentioned

Garrick in his preface to Shakespeare, and asked him if he did not admire him." (He asked him this after he and Garrick and Johnson had been together almost daily for years! As if he had never had an opportunity before of learning what Johnson thought of Garrick, whose schoolmaster he had been.) "Yes, as 'a poor player who frets and struts his hour upon the stage,' as a shadow," Johnson replied—only we are sure that he quoted Shakespeare correctly, for the mixing up of the words is undoubtedly Boswell's. "But has he not brought Shakespeare into notice?" Mr. Boswell reasoned with him; as if he did not know long ago just what Johnson thought on this particular point. "Sir, to allow that would be to lampoon the age," cried Johnson; adding gratuitously, "Many of Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted; *Macbeth*, for instance." "What, sir," said the amazed Boswell, affecting that this theory had been sprung upon him. "What, sir, is nothing gained by decoration and acting? Indeed, I do wish that you had mentioned Garrick." "My dear sir, had I mentioned him I must have mentioned many more; Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber—nay, and Mr. Cibber, too; he too altered Shakespeare," Johnson replied, and Boswell had achieved his aim. He had got Johnson to say enough for him to quote, making the world aware of the fact that while he, Boswell, was liberal enough to think very highly of Garrick, his friend Dr. Johnson, whose opinion was regarded as extremely valuable, would not allow that Garrick was anything more than Mrs. Pritchard, a very clever actress, or Mrs. Cibber, a very beautiful one, or Mr. Cibber, who, in addition to being poet laureate, was made the second hero of Pope's *Dunciad*.

It is unnecessary to give further instances of Boswell's scheme of retaliation. It is enough for us to get an inkling of his habitual resort to the tactics for which he was so thoroughly denounced by Walpole, to induce us to be cautious in reading his *Life of Johnson*, and to prevent our accepting without reserve, as so many people have done and are still doing, the criticisms of Goldsmith which are chronicled on the authority of Johnson.

Respecting those personal traits of Goldsmith which made

him seem a puzzle to a number of the Englishmen who came in contact with him, and to a greater number of North Britons, but which would be quite easily understood in Ireland, a good deal remains to be said; and it is to be hoped that the attempt which we will make later on to reconcile those forms of humour which he exercised so freely, with the varying accounts that were given of him by some of his contemporaries, will be thought worthy of consideration. But as it is from Boswell that so many casual students derive the foundation of their knowledge of Goldsmith, we have thought it advisable before entering into an incidental account of his life, in the course of which we shall have to refer to this point upon almost every page, to give as fully as possible our reasons for rejecting, without any reserve, most of the statements respecting him which appear in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, but which do not in our judgment seem capable of being reconciled with the facts of his career, the nature of his work, or his character as a man.

CHAPTER I

THE IRELAND OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH
1728–1735

THE exact place of birth of Oliver Goldsmith is as indefinite as the exact place of his burial. In the inscription on the memorial tablet in Westminster Abbey, written by Dr. Johnson, Pallas in the County Longford is given as his birthplace; but in the Registry of Trinity College Dublin, "Olivarius Goldsmith, Filius Caroli, Clerici," is vaguely entered as "natus in comitatu Westmeath." The year after his death, the Reverend Thomas Campbell, in his *Historical Survey of the South of Ireland*, stated that Roscommon had the honour of being the poet's birthplace; and this means that he accepted the story current in the neighbourhood, that his mother had been staying at the rectory of her father, the Reverend Oliver Jones, in the small town of Elphin in this county, when her son was born, and not at her husband's dilapidated house at Pallasmore, in Longford. Although Dr. Johnson, with Westminster Abbey at his back, may not be lightly regarded as an opponent, we think that the claims of Elphin to the contested honour are stronger than those of Pallas.

The date of the birth which appears upon the tablet in Westminster Abbey is November 29, 1731. This is certainly an error. The leaf of the Goldsmith Family Bible, examined by Prior, who wrote the first complete biography of the poet, gave November 10, 1728, as the date of his birth. So far as the year is concerned, this is corroborated by the Registry of Trinity College Dublin. Oliver Goldsmith's father, the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, was curate-in-charge of Pallasmore, a hamlet on a ford of the River Inny. There was also a Pallasbeg—the affixes *more* and *beg* correspond in the Irish

language to the *magna* and *parva* which still qualify some villages in England—but Pallas the little had only the significance of a small townland, consequently there was rarely need to allude in full to Pallas the great.

The Goldsmiths had for several generations been connected with this particular neighbourhood. They were not, of course, Irish; but it is not known to which of the "settlements" that had so unsettling an influence on the country they belonged. They may have come from England in the train of some of those Elizabethan adventurers who were granted the confiscated estates of the great chief Desmond, or even earlier still. Prior believed that he had traced the family back to one John Goldsmith, who in 1541 occupied the office of "searcher" at the important seaport of Galway. However this may be, there is abundance of evidence to show that for some generations there were representatives of the family in the County Roscommon, and that several of them were connected with the Church.

As curate-in-charge of Pallas in the Parish of Forgney, Charles Goldsmith had the doubtful privilege of occupying one of the most wretched of Irish parsonages and of cultivating (in the Irish fashion) one of the most wretched of glebes. It is difficult to believe that there had at any time been need for a Protestant clergyman at the place; but it is not unlikely that at some period the existence of a church had constituted a shadowy excuse for providing a trifling addition to the income of a Protestant pluralist, and it remained to crumble away even from its original insignificance. Well into the latter half of the nineteenth century such dilapidated excuses for the drawing of stipends were to be found in many parts of the island, and a clergyman discharging the duty of "reading himself in," as the ceremony was termed, surrounded by roofless walls, to a congregation composed of the parish clerk and a donkey, the former making the responses, and the latter browsing on thistles, was not unknown.

The emoluments attached to the curacy of Pallas amounted, it has been stated, to forty pounds a year exactly; but perhaps the calculation upon which these figures were based was metrical rather than arithmetical; they were probably

suggested by the sum named in a poem, the charm of which is certainly not dependent upon the accuracy of its statistics. The parson in *The Deserted Village* was said to be, as every one knows,

Passing rich with forty pounds a year.

Certainly a more unpromising soil for the root of a phrase that has served the purposes of oratory and literature almost daily for nearly a hundred and fifty years, than that of Pallas can scarcely be imagined. There are other features of Ireland besides the Lakes of Killarney. The grandeur of the scenery of the coast washed by the Atlantic has its contrast among the thousands of acres of bog in the middle of the island. Bleakness and damp desolation confront one in every direction that one may look in some of those parts, where, through the negligence of ages and the absence of any scheme of artificial drainage, the water of the many streams flowing into the great Shannon or one of its lakes, spreads over miles of the flat country after the winter rains, which are constant, and after the summer deluges, which are daily. The depressing effect of such scenery and such a climate can easily be pictured. Squalor must prevail among the inhabitants of these regions, for the natural conditions of their life leave them, as they themselves say, with no heart for anything.

In the centre of this area of depression the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, who, through his son Oliver, became the best known clergyman in Ireland, lived for thirteen years. He does not seem to have possessed any greater claim to distinction than does the faithful priest who labours within his parish and makes the temporal as well as the eternal concerns of his flock his own. That he was able to live for so long at Pallas indicates his possession of humility, and of no greater ambition than extended five miles from his own parish into that known as Kilkenny West, where, at the village of Lissoy, the church to which he was attached was situated. After fifteen or sixteen years he probably felt that, on being appointed its rector, the world could have no higher prize in store for him; and he settled down to become pointed to by all the world as the best type that ever lived of the faithful pastor.

He had not, however, waited for his promotion to get

married. The wife whom he took to share his dilapidated farmhouse was the daughter of a clergyman named Oliver Jones who kept the diocesan school at Elphin which he had attended. Her uncle was the rector of Kilkenny West, and this fact doubtless had something to do with Charles Goldsmith's succession to the living. From May 1718 until the autumn of 1730 he remained at Pallas, and in spite of the burden of four children, his son Oliver—given out of compliment to the Reverend Mr. Jones, the name most hated by the Irish—being the youngest, he does not seem to have run into debt. In 1730 he crossed the borderline of the Counties Longford and Westmeath and settled at Lissoy in the comparative affluence of two hundred pounds a year. Here three other children were born. The change from Pallas was a distinct improvement in many respects, apart from any monetary consideration. The village of Lissoy, though only a few miles away from Pallas, had some elements of picturesqueness about it, and its immediate surroundings were less monotonous than the dreary environment of the other village. It still possesses a few of the features which are touched upon in the beautiful description of Auburn; and this distinction it shares with probably some hundreds of country places both in England and Ireland. To attempt to identify the village described by any poet who lived before Wordsworth would be as hazardous a venture as to identify Windsor Forest from Pope's poem, if he had not provided us with a clue on the title-page. Many of the lines of *The Deserted Village* were undoubtedly suggested by Goldsmith's recollections of Lissoy, and possibly some complaint made about the depredations of a local landlord, in a letter which he received from his brother, suggested the humble tragedy of the poem, but it would be quite possible for a hundred villages in England to substantiate their claim to be the original of Auburn, were the question to be decided solely because of their answering to the details of identification supplied by the author. A good many, too, could produce their nightingale, and we all know that in that case Lissoy would be early disqualified for competing for the coveted position. But for that matter, could any one have seen the Irish village as it actually existed when Goldsmith lived in his father's rectory, assuredly it never would have entered any

one's head that Goldsmith had it in his mind when he described the "loveliest village of the plain." Hogarth and Teniers were able to make pictures out of the actualities of village squalor; but the sensitive Watteau and Fragonard would have shrunk from so uncongenial a task. Goldsmith had no idea of reproducing the unsavoury incidents of village life in Ireland in the eighteenth century when he wrote *The Deserted Village;* but though it may be untrue to Lissoy in many of its details, it is still true to nature in its spirit, its sentiment, and above all, its characterisation.

Oliver Goldsmith lived at this place for several years; more than half his lifetime was spent in Ireland; and yet it seems to have been thought remarkable by a good many people that he should possess so many of the characteristics of the Irish, and little emphasis has been laid by his biographers upon the fact that it was during these years in Ireland that his character was formed—that he acquired those traits which, engrafted upon such a nature as he inherited, caused him to be the most unfortunate as well as the best loved of men. The Ireland in which he was born was not so strangely different from the Ireland of to-day—that is, in the district where his early years were passed. For some hundreds of years before his birth the island was either in the throes of a struggle or in the throes of recovering from the effects of a struggle. Sometimes the conflict was between rival factions of the Irish—a proceeding which was made the excuse for English intervention upon more than one momentous occasion—but more frequently it was between the original race and the invading power.

It is as difficult for people nowadays to form a picture of the condition of Ireland previous to the conquest by England as it is for them to appreciate the glories of the early Italian republics from a casual visit to the chief cities to-day; and, curiously enough, it is among the archives of these places of splendid decay rather than those of England that one must search for confirmation of the vague traditions of the place Ireland occupied in the enterprises of civilisation. English historians have been long in crediting the stories of her brilliant past, but that was only because they failed to look in the right direction for such records as would have enabled them

to correct some of their misstatements. It is now beyond the region of surmise that up to the fourteenth century the trade of Ireland with foreign countries was very great. Her splendid harbours were crowded with ships, and her products were exchanged for those of France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands. In several of the chief towns, especially the seaports, abundant traces remain of the advanced civilisation of the inhabitants and of their connection with European culture. It could scarcely have been otherwise. The island had a language and a literature of its own, as well as a definite school of art, a school of music, and a school of poetry. Thus it occupied a place of distinction in the estimation of other centres of high culture.

It has never, we think, been made quite plain that it was the wealth of Ireland that first attracted the attention of England. It was regarded in early Tudor times, when the spirit of adventure was rife, as a sort of El Dorado, only one that was within easy reach of English ships. The spirit of adventure was the spirit of plunder, and there never was a time when robbery outside the boundary of one's own country was so universally regarded as praiseworthy. Spain had been plundering in America for more than a hundred years, and England had organised expeditions for the plundering of the plunderers. Unless one has been made aware of the wealth of Ireland one is quite incapable of understanding why England should have taken so much trouble to conquer the island, and to keep the people in a condition of subjection. If Ireland had been a poor country, or if her industry and enterprise had not been regarded as a serious menace to English trade, it is certain that England would not have taken the enormous trouble she did to get a footing on the island and to maintain that foothold. Unfortunately, however, her rulers thought that the only sure foothold that could be found was on the necks of the people, and the result was, as is well known, deplorable. If both nations had recognised the fact that a strong alliance on terms of perfect equality would be of mutual advantage, stimulating industry and commerce on both sides of the channel, the result would have been to make that United Kingdom without a rival in importance in the world. Unhappily, however, there seemed to be no

desire on either side to accept the possibility of the existence of any other relationship between them than that of invaders and invaded.

The story of the years that intervened between the earliest attempts made to subjugate the Irish and the beginning of the nineteenth century is the most wretched that was ever written by the swords of an invader with the heart-blood of the invaded. Massacres were followed by retaliating slaughters of men, women, and children, and the best families of the original Irish were expatriated, finding in France, Spain and America a welcome, and living to take part with them in the old fight against England. Those who remained in Ireland were subjected to such acts of injustice as would be incredible were they not fully authenticated by reference to the statute books of many reigns.

The incidents of their oppression after a time came to be accepted by the people as the natural order of things; but the taking of such a view of matters marks their degeneracy. The Ireland of Goldsmith's early years contained a native population who were forbidden by law to receive even a rudimentary education; and scattered in groups among them, were the descendants of the English who had been sent to drive out the native-born people, and who as Protestants were allowed certain privileges, that of education being chief. But when a ship is sinking it sinks with the people of the quarterdeck as well as with those of the forecastle. The privilege of taking their meals in the cuddy is a precious one, but it does not prevent the privileged ones from being submerged. The wretched state of things in the country was participated in by the Protestant groups as well as by the Roman Catholic population; and in many parts of the island south of a small area in Ulster, where the effects of the struggle of 1688 were to raise up a barbed barrier between the two races, very little real animosity existed. The struggle to make some sort of a living was common to both parties, and the same hand-to-mouth existence was the only one possible to either. As it was impossible to save anything, thriftlessness became a habit, and as a man did not know the hour when he might stand in sore need of relief, he was accustomed to give freely when he found a penny in his pocket. The traditional

hospitality and generosity of the native Irish were acquired by the English settlers and practised as freely; and, no one having any experience of the workings of justice, it became the habit of all to be generous before being just. Life under common conditions developed common traits; and thus it was that, as the followers of Strongbow became proverbially more Irish than the Irish themselves, so the later settlers became undistinguishable from the native born: their English virtues of prudence and diligence had become atrophied through disuse; they knew that the ship was sinking, and they jettisoned their social virtues to lighten her for a while. They were only passengers, but why should they not join hands with the thoughtless, merry, original ship's company on deck so long as their heads kept above water?

This was the condition of things in the isolated regions of the interior of Ireland in Goldsmith's early years. There was no distinctive trait to mark the Joneses, the Greens, or the Goldsmiths from the O'Farrells of O'Farrell's country, as the northern part of Meath was called, or the ferocious O'Flahertys of O'Flaherty's country in the west, or the O'Reillys of O'Reilly's country to the east. They all had a common interest in the land, and that was to get through life as easily as possible, and to get as much fun out of it as they could. The few resident landowners in that part of the country, or indeed in almost any other part, were not of much account. Why should these gentlemen of spirit isolate themselves among the bogs when they could hire agents to squeeze the rents out of their tenants to be squandered in the lively society to be found in Dublin? And so the priests, whose existence was contrary to law, celebrated the Mass by open stealth, so to speak, and looked after the morals of their flocks, living on excellent terms with the Protestant parsons, and giving offence to none.

These priests, being withheld from education in an island where the towns were named from the colleges round which they were built, and where in the early days the very peasants, men and women, could converse in Latin, went to qualify for their office at some of the foreign seminaries. It was from one of them that Oliver Goldsmith became a linguist. He spoke French fluently, and, perhaps, Italian as well.

Chief of all the virtues which the priests endeavoured to inculcate was virtue. The lapses from the straight path were rare on the part of their flock. The means which they employed for excluding the evil tended to the maintenance of virtue and thriftlessness. The priests were then, as they have remained ever since, the great matchmakers in their own communities; they were practically the sole instigators and arbiters of the matrimonial ventures of their people; and they took care that the boys and girls under their guidance ran no risk except that of starvation. Marriages between boys of seventeen years and girls of sixteen kept them living in a condition of virtuous squalor in all parts of the land. They increased with that celerity which has been characteristic of an oppressed race since the days of Israel in Egypt. Rarely had either of the parties to the contract a voice in the transaction until it was ready to be carried out. The priest looked out for a likely girl for a likely lad, and then approached the parents, not with a suggestion but with the authority of the Church issuing a mandate, and rarely were the consequences of disobedience faced by either of the families. It may be said that this absence of all the romance of love-making scarcely bears out what has been written about the Irish as a romantic race; but a little consideration of the matter must show that the element of romance entered very largely into these matrimonial arrangements, only it was the romance of the gambler in place of the romance of the lover. Seldom, however, did the judgment of the matchmaker show itself at fault; but the racial consequences of obedience were direful. The population increased with such extraordinary rapidity during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, that nature's most desperate remedy for over-population overwhelmed the land, and within a few months famine had neutralised the growth of a hundred years; and not only so, it went much further, and put in motion the machinery for such a dispersal of the surplus as has rarely been recorded in the history of any people, a dispersal which showed few signs of decrease up to the year 1909.

Such was the Ireland of Oliver Goldsmith's youth, and of such an Ireland he was the natural product. It was his life under the conditions of living which prevailed at Lissoy that

influenced his career. His outlook did not differ to any extent from that of the people about him. An implicit trust in Providence makes the most improvident of people; but when a man occupies the position of a local providence, his condition becomes hopeless, owing to the onerous character of the obligations imposed upon him by the *rôle*. There can be little doubt that this was the part which his father was encouraged to play; and he played it to the entire satisfaction of the neighbourhood. That was very well so far as it went; but such a position as he occupied should only be a life one; an attempt to establish a dynasty on such a basis is certain to end in disaster. The father of the Goldsmiths believed in the hereditary principle in this connection; he taught his children the unworldly doctrine that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and the result was to unfit them for worldly success. One of the most prominent characteristics of the world is worldliness, but Charles Goldsmith led his children to believe exactly the opposite; and the result was that one of them lived miserably as a genius and another starved as a carpenter. There was not a member of the family that did not "go under." The worldliness of the world was too much for them, seeing that they had been taught from their infancy that unworldliness is the most important of virtues. The others were all probably as truly loved within their circle, which was bounded by the tiny town of Elphin in the north and the obscure village of Ballymahon in the south, as Oliver Goldsmith was by his circle, which even in his own day was bounded only by the circumference of the globe; but all became equally submerged by the stress and strain of life in a world that was made for the worldly.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOLING

1735–1744

OLIVER GOLDSMITH passed his boyhood in his father's parish, and unconsciously qualified himself for the part which he afterwards played in the world. Superstition is only another name for imagination, and their superstitions and traditions were all that was left to the community in which he lived. The legends attached to even the most commonplace localities in Ireland are innumerable. The ghosts, the fairies, the leprechauns, and quite a large family of local freaks of the same unsubstantial nature were ever present with the people, and the tales of their appearances to certain favoured—or unfavoured—persons and the consequences, disastrous or lucky, were circulated nightly when the cabins were illuminated only by a "sod" of turf that glowed on the hearth. The supernatural has always played a part in the daily life of the remote communities in Ireland to a much greater extent than it ever has in England; and the appreciation of this element is the beginning of all poetry.

And then there were the traditional dances of the country, brisker and more complicated in the variety of their steps than any in the world—the Irish jigs, with subtle suggestions of challenge and surrender, in which the music is made by the feet, note by note, and carried on from measure to measure. Dancing contests took place in the open air, on a floor improvised by removing a wooden door from its hinges—if any door in the village retained its hinges—and laying it flat on the green sward—very green in some parts of Ireland, and usually sodden. The music was supplied by the travelling fiddler and perhaps by a local player on the bagpipes, that softly plaintive Irish instrument whose delicate notes bore

no resemblance to the loud raucous sounds produced by the Highland pipes.

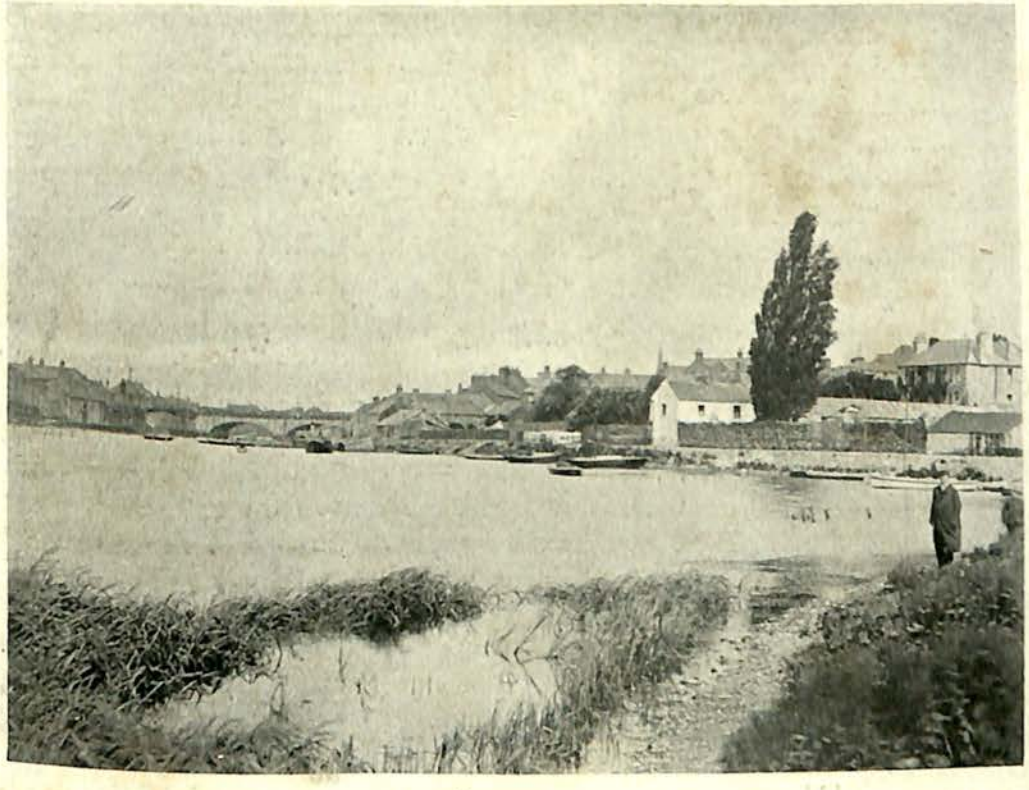
And the old melodies of the country, of which only a few hundred survive to make us aware of the fact that at one time Ireland was from north to south a land of minstrelsy, must have been familiar to Goldsmith from his childhood, and familiarity with them doubtless contributed to the culture of that perfect musical sensitiveness which he possessed in a larger measure than any poet of his century.

All the conditions under which he lived at Lissoy went to the making of Goldsmith the poet, as well as of Goldsmith the man. He was extremely sensitive at every period of his life. His mind and his imagination were receptive to an extraordinary degree. Though no doubt the Protestantism of his family renounced the superstitions of the native Irish, yet they were only renounced, not denounced by the kindly clergyman, and the atmosphere was saturated with them. Oliver Goldsmith must have drunk deep of them and of the romances told to him of the river and the lake and the sedge and the bog and the glen—every place had its story-legend, and to a receptive boy a legend is more real than the news of yesterday. He learned to sing, and he learned to play the flute. There can scarcely be a doubt that he became moderately proficient both in singing and playing. A foolish person, writing about him after his death, told a story of a piece of musical notation being put in his hands with view to discover whether or not he could read it; and the result was, we are told, that he pretended to do so, but held the notes upside down. As if a student like Goldsmith would remain in ignorance of rudiments that could be mastered in an hour! The man might as well have talked of Goldsmith holding a book upside down. The truth was that he could sing, dance, and play the flute, and that he acquired a knowledge of these arts as he acquired his colloquial knowledge of French and Italian, from professors (of a sort) in his own neighbourhood. Years afterwards he was able to present to Boswell the music of the Irish melody to which he had put words, to be sung by the representative of Miss Hardcastle. It was omitted on account of Mrs. Bulkley not being a vocalist.

But in these early years he was also getting a poet's

training in the open-air life which he must have led. His love for natural scenery never forsook him. When he had arduous work to do he ever hastened to the country to do it —to Islington or to his retreat on the Edgware Road. *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, the histories, and *Animated Nature* were all written in the midst of fields. With Lissoy as a centre he must have taken many excursions. He found abundance of matter to interest him in all directions. The lake, Lough Ree, which was only a few miles from his home, is seventeen miles long and at places seven broad. It lies in the valley of the great Shannon, surrounded by low hills, and studded with islands of the brightest emerald at its northern shallows. Bay after bay breaks up the low coastline on its western shore, and here and there a long narrow arm reaches out from the undulations of the green shore to the undulations of the grey waters. On one of them stands the venerable ruin of St. John's Castle and a short way off, on shelving sand, are the remains of St. John's church, its ivy-clad walls standing up from a valley of mighty weeds. The lake is swarming with fish, for its waters are on the direct route of the salmon that may be seen flashing over the rapids higher up on the river, on their way to the spawning beds, and the sedges along the shallows on both banks and around the many islands are the haunts of thousands of wildfowl. The stillness of the summer night as one lies awake in a boat midway between the shores, is broken at intervals by the plaintive triple whistle of the curlew, the hoarse note of the great mallard, flying so close to the surface that the flip of the smitten water is heard rippling away into the distance; and then the weird barking of a flock of wild geese moving athwart the bands of moonlight. After a space of silence one hears the splash of a fish—a second and a third, and after another interval the air is full of the winnowing of the wings of some huge bird flying across the flat lake, the mass of its shape but dimly seen as it sails slowly overhead.

Only a few hours' sail past the picturesque town of Athlone, where the lake narrows into the river, the splendid ruin of Clon-mac-nois—the college of the sons of the nobles—stands on a height on one bank of the Shannon, and further south



THE SHANNON AT ATHLONE.

From a photograph by W. Swanston.

use; and undoubtedly his Irish years spent in the open air on the banks of Lough Ree and the Shannon, fowling and fishing and bird-nesting and hunting as boys hunt, gave him confidence in handling his subject, when he ventured away from Buffon whom he made his guide.

The stories of this portion of his life which are given by those distinguished biographers of Goldsmith whose research in the matter of dates and details is as admirable as their judgment on most questions bearing upon his history, are not remarkable. When his father removed to his new parish and his income of two hundred pounds a year—disqualifying himself by its acceptance for the "passing rich" standard—Oliver Goldsmith was but two years old. The elder son, Henry, was eight. The old woman named Elizabeth Delap, who had occupied in the rectory *ménage* a position the nature of which will be understood in Ireland rather better than in England, was a relation who had probably taken a fancy to the children, and from being a frequent visitor to the nursery had drifted into the place of nursery governess, with most likely an occasional excursion to the kitchen and thence to the laundry. A few generations ago there was scarcely a house—certainly no rectory—in the more inaccessible parts of Ireland that did not include at least one dependent of this type, whose duties Dr. Johnson himself would not have ventured to define. This good woman was accustomed, after Goldsmith had become famous and had been dead for years, to entertain her visitors with anecdotes of the great man when a child. She it was who had first put a book into the hands that had afterwards written so many—a good many more we fancy than Mrs. Delap had found time to read. Of course he was a stupid child—according to this class of informant great men and women are usually either precocious to an extraordinary degree or stupid to the same extreme. It altogether depends upon the informant; the subject of the information has nothing to do with the matter. It is greatly to be regretted that there is no means for determining by certain birth-marks when a child is destined to achieve greatness in after life, so that the people around it may begin to make notes of its lispings for future biographers. It is understood that some of the Roman Emperors appeared in their cradles with a halo lambent

over their pillows. Of course this was a sufficient indication of future greatness to cause every one who was around them to be on the alert to chronicle their earliest words and doings. The only drawback to the acceptance of such a sign as definite is the fact that every mother who sees her child—especially her first child—lying asleep in its cradle, sees that very halo surrounding the little head, and begins to chronicle its precocities so urgently that her friends hasten to the other side of the street when they see her coming.

We have all met this Mrs. Delap, who at the age of ninety was still telling stories of Oliver Goldsmith's childhood, and mixing them up, we may rest assured, with the stories of his elder brother Henry, or his younger brothers Charley and Maurice. In any case the good woman had nothing that was worth the telling. She put a book into Oliver Goldsmith's hand, that was all. It was when he was six that he was sent to the cabin school of Thomas Byrne, a man who, having retired from the army with the rank of quartermaster, possibly thought himself fully qualified to act as schoolmaster. He had taken part in Marlborough's campaigns and doubtless made his boys respect him as an indispensable factor in the achievement of such victories as he won with the respectful co-operation of the great Duke; but it would be going too far to assume that Quartermaster Byrne was better qualified to tell anything of the politics bearing upon the Spanish campaign than was old Kaspar to explain "What they killed each other for" in the Low Countries. It may, however, be taken for granted that he had abandoned the reprehensible practice attributed to "our army in Flanders" by a non-commissioned officer named Trim who had been through that profitless war; otherwise the clergyman would not have allowed his son to sit in front of his desk—if he had a desk. He was wise enough not to allow the old man's reputation as a *raconteur* to disqualify him as a teacher of the rudiments to the boy who lived to make him as well known as the Duke himself and much more highly respected.

The perfect picture of the schoolmaster in *The Deserted Village* was undoubtedly inspired by the poet's recollections of Thomas Byrne; but equally certain is it that the school was an English village school and not the cabin where Thomas

Byrne "shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won." Goldsmith's sister, Mrs. Hodson, who contributed some interesting chapters to Bishop Percy's *Memoir* of the poet, attributed his vagrant tendencies to the influence of Byrne. If she was right, her statement leaves us in the condition of not quite knowing whether we should be grateful to the man or blame him. If Goldsmith had never acquired the deplorable habits of a vagrant the world would have been the poorer by a poem which it could ill spare.

Writing about her brother when he was under the influence of Byrne, Catherine Hodson states with great emphasis that the child showed such signs of genius as "quickly engaged the notice of all the friends of the family, many of whom were in the Church"—and, therefore, we suppose, fully qualified to pronounce an opinion on what is admittedly a very delicate question. However, as it may be taken for granted that his uncle Contarine was one of the ecclesiastical syndicate alluded to, her statement must be credited, for this gentleman subsequently showed in the most practical way his belief that the boy would turn out, if not a genius, at any rate a credit to the family—not exactly the same thing. His father was not so greatly impressed as the rest of the family by observing the boy's fondness for books, and made up his mind to apprentice him to a tradesman when he would be old enough. He did not consider himself justified in spending money upon the education of more than one son, and his eldest was meant for the University of Dublin to qualify him for taking orders. But it soon became plain that even the education for a tradesman's apprentice was beyond the Byrne curriculum, so the boy was removed to the day-school of the Reverend Mr. Griffin, at Elphin, a home being provided for him in the house of his uncle on his father's side, John Goldsmith of Ballyoughter, a mile or two away.

From the family of this gentleman comes the anecdote of his brilliancy at the age of nine. One evening he was dancing a hornpipe at a children's party, for which the music was supplied by another clever, but much older, boy, who, noting how Oliver had been greatly disfigured by smallpox, thought he saw his chance, and forthwith began to allude to him as Æsop. For some time Oliver paid no attention to

him—a hornpipe is a somewhat absorbing thing—but at last he stopped suddenly, and pointing to the musician cried, quite pat :

> Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,
> See Æsop dancing and his monkey playing.

It may at once be said that if Goldsmith really did make the couplet, it represented a bitterness of satire of which he was never afterwards guilty. He never attempted a satire in verse until he wrote his *Retaliation* and then he proved that, as he did everything else he attempted with his pen better than any other man, so he did satire. Brilliancy of wit without a point of malice, a sting without the poison of a sting—this was Goldsmith's satire, and we do not know where to look for its parallel in English literature.

Mrs. Hodson goes on to say that it was his smartness displayed in the couplet that caused his father to be persuaded into an agreement to allow him to go to the University ; perhaps his decision in this respect was influenced more powerfully by the offer of the good uncle Contarine to contribute to the expense than by the example of the boy's cleverness of repartee which had been brought under his notice.

After some years he was taken from the Elphin academy, where it is said he had suffered a good deal from the gibes of his schoolfellows. He probably found that they were not silenced by an intellectual effort such as had brought about the discomfiture of the fiddler. The only repartee that a school boy admits to be effective is the result of physical rather than mental dexterity, and it may be taken for granted from some incidents of the poet's maturity that he was fully qualified to reply through the medium that appealed to his tormentors. But the truth probably is that he did not suffer more by the gibes of his schoolfellows at his scarred features than he would have done if he had had red hair—abhorred by the Irish —with instinctive memories of the Danes—as well as by the English boy—or large ears or an infirmity of sight. These schoolboy "sufferings" are never very poignant unless the boy is an ill-conditioned cub, which Oliver Goldsmith never was. The boy is father to the man, and the ill-conditioned boy usually grows into an ill-conditioned man ; so it cannot be doubted that, even though there may have been

an Elphin ring formed to tease him, he found his days at the school to pass as pleasantly as was consistent with a consciousness of habitual work. At the Elphin academy he laid the foundation of that solid, if not profound, scholarship which permitted of his taking a place among the scholars who became his friends in after life.

When he was nearly twelve years of age, he was taken from Elphin and sent to a school in the comparatively large and important town of Athlone, only a few miles from his father's house. It was kept by a clergyman named Campbell, who had a great reputation—it may have extended as far as Mullingar in one direction and Ballinasloe in another—as a Latin scholar. With many opportunities of visiting Lissoy he probably found Athlone a more congenial place than Elphin; but Mr. Campbell's health becoming impaired he was forced to give up his school and his boys were dispersed. Oliver Goldsmith was sent to another parson-teacher named Hughes, who lived at Edgeworthstown in the County Longford, and who, it would appear, was the most sympathetic and appreciative of all his masters. It seems rather remarkable that with so many clergymen giving up their spare time to teaching in these places, the Reverend Charles Goldsmith never made the attempt to undertake the education of his son Oliver at home. If with his large family he found his resources of living so straightened as to necessitate his accepting of contributions from his relations in order to send Oliver to the University, it might be thought that he would have been glad of the chance of saving the school expenses by teaching his sons himself. He was certainly fully qualified to do so; but it is quite likely that so practical a means of economising never occurred to so unpractical a man. At any rate his younger son remained for some time on the friendliest footing with the Reverend Patrick Hughes at Edgeworthstown.

It was probably his consciousness of being on such excellent terms with Mr. Hughes that gave him that idea of his own importance which led to one of the happiest of the many adventures of his life. His sister tells the story. Upon the occasion of his leaving home for his last term at the school, some friend had given him a guinea, and on his way to Edgeworthstown, which was about twenty miles from his father's house,

he had diverted himself the whole day by viewing the gentlemen's seats on the road, until, at the fall of night, he found himself in a small town named Ardagh. Here he inquired for the best house in the place, meaning an inn, but his bumptious simplicity being taken advantage of by a local humourist, he was directed to the house of a private gentleman, where, calling for somebody to take his horse and lead him to the stable, he alighted and was shown into the parlour, being supposed to be a guest come to visit the master, whom he found sitting by a good fire. This gentleman immediately discovered Oliver's mistake, and being a man of humour and also learning from him the name of his father, who happened to be among his acquaintance, he encouraged the deception. Oliver accordingly called about him, ordered a good supper, and generously invited the master, his wife, and daughters to partake of it; treated them with a bottle or two of wine, and when going to bed ordered a hot cake to be prepared for his breakfast; nor was it till, at his departure, when he called for the bill, that he found he had been hospitably entertained in a private family.

A happier accident never happened. How it was made the foundation for the best comedy of the century is a matter of history. No one who has had any experience of how an incident of such a type lives in the recollection of an Irish household and an Irish village, can doubt that for years it was a standing joke at Lissoy against Oliver. One can see the solemn face of Mr. Byrne, with only the merest twinkle in one of his eyes as he greets his old pupil at the next time of their meeting, and inquires if he found the accommodation good at the inns on the way to Edgeworthstown. We can hear the voice of Mrs. Delap expressing her fear that he will think the simple fare of the rectory commonplace when compared with the luxurious suppers which he has been ordering in other people's houses; and we may be sure that for many a night when he had gone upstairs to bed, a brother or a sister shouted after him an inquiry if he wouldn't like a hot cake for breakfast. The memory of such incidents dies hard in those districts of Ireland. In some cases we have known, on a far less substantial basis than that of Goldsmith's *Mistakes of a Night*, such badinage as can only be found in Ireland has been continued

for over forty years. Sometimes an elderly man will be found bearing a nickname which he received as a youth by reason of his connection with an incident that told against him.

That Oliver Goldsmith should have remembered and made use of an adventure that showed him in a most ridiculous light was characteristic of the man and of his nationality. It proves very clearly that he could never have been the ill-conditioned person Boswell and others have tried to make out that he was. But the possibility of a man's recalling and working up a story founded upon his own ridiculous blunder could only occur to the mind of a man who was made genial by a sense of humour. Humour for humour's sake has ever been the weakness of the Irish, and it was because Oliver Goldsmith possessed a much stronger sense of all that constitutes the elements of humour than did the people with whom he associated during the last ten years of his life, that he was so misunderstood by many of them. He was not the less beloved on this account, but it is apparent that a good deal of the affection bestowed upon him was of the nature of that given to a child who is occasionally very silly, but with a good heart.

The name of the wag who played Tony Lumpkin's trick upon Goldsmith is said to have been Cornelius Kelly—beyond a doubt he was never known within his own circle by any other name than Corney Kelly, almost as good a name as Tony Lumpkin. The gentleman who had the spirit to enter into the humour of the situation was said to be a Mr. Featherstone, and the accuracy of the whole story was vouched for by one of his descendants, Sir Thomas Featherstone.

The next year Oliver Goldsmith went to the University of Dublin, entering as a sizar on June 11, 1744, at the age of sixteen.

CHAPTER III

AT THE UNIVERSITY

1744—1747

THE City of Dublin during the middle of the eighteenth century must have possessed many attractions in the eyes of pleasure-seekers. The easy prodigality of the Irish gentry found its vent in the capital, and the result was a season of gaiety that lasted from the beginning of January to the end of December. The rival hospitalities of the various distinguished residents were imitated with no abatement of spirit by the tradesmen and shopkeepers; and when the few appeared in all the brilliancy of silks and satins, the many appeared in all the glory that still clings to the "cast-offs," by judicious pinnings where the original buttons and hooks have been wrenched off. Dublin was ever the city whose fashion was that of the cast-off garment, which in its original condition had been splendid and unpaid for. In the middle of the eighteenth century it had about it something of the character of Paris a hundred years later. It had about it a good deal of the flash of the Second Empire, as regards the many grades of society that it contained, the aim of each being to get into the one a little higher and to keep the one a little lower in its place. Hospitality was lavish in every direction, and in all grades of society; no question of means or money being considered in connection with the exercise of this traditional virtue of the Irish; for was not a contemptuous disregard for mercenary details—except perhaps in respect of the collection of rack-rents—also a tradition with the Irish gentry?

The city was until 1760 one of the most poorly built and dirtiest in Europe. The rivalry between the wealthy in the building of mansions, causing square after square

of noble stone-built houses to be laid out in the classical style of architecture which was finding favour on the other side of the channel, began about the beginning of the third quarter of the century, when Italian workers in marble and stucco were imported by the score to give the interior of perfectly proportioned rooms the semblance of the apartments of the most famous Roman villas. The ceilings, the doors, the staircase, the mantelpieces, and the floors were alike admirable. Such forms of decoration as survived the ill-treatment of the occupants when these mansions were turned into tenement houses, with families of the lowest class of vagrants in every room, made it to the advantage of dealers, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, to purchase and break up a whole house in order to secure these memorials of past splendour. Cipriani and Angelina Kauffman, as well as a number of less accomplished artists, were brought to Dublin, and traces of their work may still be seen in several interiors. The furniture was in keeping with the mural decorations, and the patronage of art in many other forms reached a point that would have meant prosperity to trade had patronage and payment meant the same thing. But the patronage was that of the prodigal—less costly to the patron than to his *protégé*.

This period of refinement (of a sort) may be said to have begun with the Viceregency of that elegant *roué*, the Earl of Chesterfield, who, when Johnson went patron-hunting for his dictionary, kept him waiting in an ante-room and thus was the means of obtaining for the world the finest specimen extant of the complete letter-writer. Previous to Lord Chesterfield's coming to Dublin Castle, society in the city was permeated with that sort of gaiety which is the result of constant drinking. Any form of entertainment that had not an intimate association with the bottle was unknown. Party feeling ran high, and that was an element which the fellowship of one bottle allayed, but the indiscretion of a second inflamed: with the third or fourth, *per capita*, came the brawl. The gaiety of a brawl, with pistol shots and the flash of steel, might be indulged in every night in every grade of society in Dublin. That was what was called fun. There was no such thing known as a banquet without bloodshed. The coarseness of

the habits of the best society was astonishing to the English visitors in the Viceregal *entourage;* and this was possibly why the moment appeared an opportune one for the publication of a volume on etiquette, entitled *Hints to Introduce Decorum at City Feasts and Sunday Ordinaries in Dublin*, and there cannot be a doubt that the author's judgment was correct on this point, and his volume did not appear too soon. Among the hints which he considers advisable to offer for his readers is not to be too eager for the first cut from any joint at a banquet, and not to have a plate heaped with meat and vegetables. Two pounds weight, roughly speaking, he suggests as reasonable, but he adds, "to start with." He goes so far as to consider it inadvisable "to drag the leg of a fowl through your teeth in order to secure your property in it, and then lay it by to pick at your leisure." He discountenances throwing rejected "scraps of meat off your plate into the dish." Arthur Murphy mentions that "the tables groaned with abundance, but there was neither order nor good taste in the establishments." Burgundy was usually drunk during dinner, which began as early as two o'clock, and then whisky punch was freely indulged in until long past midnight.

But undoubtedly the influence of Chesterfield upon all classes was a refining one. He did much to allay at least the quarrelsome features of politics and religion in the city, and it was he who made elegance rather than profusion the fashion. The scheme of building which induced such a rivalry between the leading families, was begun during his last year at the Castle, though it was not perfected until Lord Charlemont showed what could be done by good taste combined with knowledge; and in quick succession there sprang into existence a set of classical palaces equal to any that were to be found in London. But long before the benign influence of Chesterfield came to beautify the city, the pleasure-loving people had their courts, their assemblies, their routs, and their gaming-rooms. They had a pretty fair conceit of themselves as patrons of the drama, and they carried their zeal for its welfare to such a length that every theatre-manager became bankrupt, and the most capable of them all, Thomas Sheridan, the father of another and later theatre-manager in London, had his house wrecked by them. For a full century the English

stage got from Dublin its greatest ornaments, and the Dublin people discussed the theatre, fêted the artists of the theatre, and in fact did everything for the theatre short of going to the theatre.

Such was Dublin and such was its people when Oliver Goldsmith entered at Trinity College, whose Provost, Dr. Andrews, owed his position, not to his ripe scholarship, but to his friendship for Margaret Woffington; but as it was a group of the students who had discovered this charming actress when no more than a child and had got up a purse to enable her to be educated, it is difficult to accept the report which was current at the time, to the effect that she bargained with him to receive the sum of five thousand pounds as a reward for her services on behalf of higher education in Ireland.

The impression produced upon the mind of an imaginative boy, fresh from the dulness of a country village, on suddenly finding himself in the centre of this new form of life, can without difficulty be understood. The brilliance of the scenes which took place before his eyes every hour of the day in the centre of that city where everything was showy, must never have been forgotten by him. The boy who had never seen a vehicle more startling than a country chaise with wheels broad enough to pass through the quagmires of the Irish roads, must have gazed in amazement at the splendid equipages of the Peers and Members of Parliament which passed through the noble entrances to their chambers on the other side of the college gates. The gilded coach of the Lord-Lieutenant with its six horses and outriders in gorgeous liveries, with its cavalry escort in all the bravery of helmet and sabre, driving down the broad thoroughfare known as the College Green, straight for the college gates; the guard turning out in front of the Houses of Parliament, with the colours and the band to salute his Excellency as the retinue flashed by; the noble chariots painted in all colours, and with panels carved and gilded in many devices, every vehicle with four horses and postilions, and half a dozen silken lackeys clinging in a double row on the footboard behind; the graceful chairs, the window of each framing the wonderful face and the lower part of the head-dress of such a

lady as he had never seen even in the height of the season at Athlone itself; the groups on horse and on foot of those who followed the followers of fashion, and so believed themselves to be of the same rank, on their way to the bridge that led to the spacious Mall—Oliver Goldsmith must have stood at the college gate, where it was said he was most frequently to be found, lost in wonder at the moving scenes and the glitter of a life the like of which he had never thought to look upon.

The scenes of glitter and gaiety have dissolved into the emptiness of the void; the gorgeous creatures in velvet and lace turned out to be nonentities; the very name of the Lord-Lieutenant makes no appeal to us nowadays. They were all shadows, and like shadows they passed away. One only in that scene remains to-day, a reality, an immortal—a small, thick-set, plain-faced boy, clad in dingy garments of country make, gazing out upon the flowing stream, vivid and full of colour, which rolled past him, his heart full of envy of the least of those nonentities that flaunted a nobleman's cast-off coat of satin in his face. Oliver Goldsmith, the only sombre speck upon the scene, is the sole survivor to-day.

It can hardly be doubted that it was this impression of the importance of fine clothes which he gained when standing at the College gate, that afflicted him for so many years. He had inherited from his father no ambition to shine in the world, except perhaps in conversation; but assuredly he made up his mind that if he ever had money enough, he would appear in as brilliant a coat as was worn by any of the gentlemen's gentlemen who swaggered down the College Green. It is pretty certain that his ambition in this direction was amply achieved. There can hardly have been a Filby-cut peach-bloom coat in all Dublin lackeydom.

He had not reached the University without the need for a great effort to be made on his behalf by all the family. The resources of the Lissoy rectory had just been subjected to a rather severe strain. Henry Goldsmith had left college, having obtained a scholarship of considerable value. He had followed the example of the priest-ridden boys and girls in his neighbourhood and married before he was twenty. He

had then become tutor to the son of a gentleman of property at St. John's, a place on the banks of Lough Ree, and the pupil, on becoming acquainted with the Goldsmith family, fell in love with Catherine and induced her to marry him privately. Of course the secret did not long remain one; and on its being discovered the more angry and more indignant parent was not, as might have been supposed, Mr. Hodson, the father of the boy, but Mr. Goldsmith, the father of the girl. He had an impression that the honour of the family was tarnished by this act on the part of his daughter and that it could only be restored by his presenting her with a marriage portion of four hundred pounds. Whether or not the father of the young man had said some sharp words about the boy's having been entrapped into a marriage with a penniless girl, the fact remains that the elder Goldsmith's view of the transaction was as absurd in its relation to the claims of his daughter as it was unjust to the other members of his household. It was, however, quite typical of the unpractical head of the Goldsmith family. That the young man's father, Daniel Hodson, should have accepted on behalf of the son a bond for a sum which he could not but know entailed an enormous sacrifice on the part of the poor parson, causes one to feel that however humble the Goldsmith family were, the girl had degraded herself by marrying the son of so despicable a person as this Mr. Daniel Hodson of St. John's, Co. Roscommon.

That bond made all the difference in the world to the future of Oliver Goldsmith, though not the smallest allusion was ever made by him to this fact either in a letter to his sister or in one to his brother. Of course it could hardly be expected that a boy of fourteen or fifteen should have the worldly wisdom to utter a protest against a means of upholding the honour of the family at the expense of one of its members, or to suggest that it would be much more dishonourable to jeopardise the future of a son than to countenance the marriage of a dowerless daughter to a man whose parents were wealthy. It possibly never occurred to the son, who was to play the part of little Isaac in the sacrifice which his father felt called upon to make, that he was being treated inconsiderately in this business; but even though we know that his worldly wisdom at any time of his life was not greater

than that of an average boy of fifteen or sixteen who has been brought up in England, not in America, still no one would have blamed him if now and again, when he remembered all that he had suffered by the transfer of the money from the fund for his education to the pocket of a wealthy man who got a good wife into the bargain, he had grumbled. But no murmur ever came from Goldsmith; he allowed himself to be bound to the altar and no ram caught by the horns in the thicket made a timely appearance on his behalf. It may also be remarked that there is no record of his sister's having said a word on the subject, or of this precious Hodson family, who pocketed his four hundred pounds, though they had no need for it, seeking to do anything for him or for the other Goldsmiths who were subsequently in great straits for money. On the contrary, it was Oliver Goldsmith who, in after life, fed and clothed his sister's son for more than a whole year in London.

The sum for which Charles Goldsmith gave the bond represented two years of his income, and his son Henry had accepted the responsibilities connected with the "forty pounds a year" tradition in which the Goldsmiths seemed to have a sort of vested interest, so that if Oliver was to be sent to the University it was plain that he must be entered as a sizar. And even adopting such a course, it was necessary to appeal to the generosity of the benevolent uncle Contarine, a man whose unwearying kindness to Goldsmith will ever cause his name to be remembered with respect. This Thomas Contarine was a clergyman who held the benefice of Kilmore, near Carrick-on-Shannon, and had married Charles Goldsmith's sister. He was said to be a lineal descendant of the Contarini family of Venice, one member of which had, while belonging to a monastic order, eloped with a nun, and after marrying her, escaped to France and afterwards to England. His wife dying of small-pox, he married a Miss Chaloner of Chester, and, joining the Church of England, was ordained and obtained a living near Elphin. From one of his sons Thomas Contarine was descended. He had only one child, a daughter, so that he was in the position of the well-to-do uncle, only with more generosity than is usually found in connection with such a centre of family hopes as that relation

is made by his nephews and nieces. He had contributed, with a cousin named Green, to the expenses of Oliver's schooling, and now he came forward with his purse to enable the boy to go to the University. But in spite of all, considering the liability for the four hundred pound bond incurred by the father, his entrance at Trinity in any other capacity than that of sizar was impossible, and the consequence was that Oliver Goldsmith's college days were among the most miserable of his life, and, just at the most critical time, he ran the chance of having his character warped, and his whole nature changed. As it was he came through the ordeal, but certainly not unscathed.

Every one who has been to a public school and an English University will acknowledge that the element of snobbery is cultivated at both to an extent unknown elsewhere. It is of course possible for a boy to become extremely popular at either, if he possesses in himself the elements of popularity, irrespective of his family and condition in life; but as snobbery really means only the exercise of the primeval instinct of being on the most friendly terms with the well-born and the influential, and as schoolboys are closer to the instincts of the primeval than are their fathers who have lived in the world for some time and learned that the battle is not always to the strong, they are usually very primeval in their bearing toward those whom they believe to be their inferiors. The "rankers" in these educational regiments have still, in spite of the spread of a new and more liberal spirit, a bad time when mingling with those who have rank on their side; and there is still no place where class prejudice runs so deep as in the classroom.

Now if one can imagine an institution where these prejudices exist to an abnormal extent, and far beyond anything known in an English University, one will come within measurable distance of understanding what Trinity College Dublin was in the middle of the eighteenth century. We have heard of Irish pride, and we have had many proofs of its survival in every part of Ireland up to the present day; and what must it have been when exercised by those sons of the "Protestant ascendancy" who alone were allowed to participate in the very doubtful advantages of a college education? We know that Trinity College was *Imperium*

in Imperio—it had been for centuries an aggregation of exclusiveness in comparison with which "White's" was a common tap-room and the later "Almack's" a beer-shop in the Borough. The college, though situated in the very centre of Dublin, was a separate and distinct corporation in itself. It had its own laws and its own rulers, and only upon some notable occasion, such as the celebration of the Battle of the Boyne, did the College join hands with the City by sending representatives—half a dozen accredited and some hundreds independent—to the procession that marched round the statue of William III. and saluted the leaden figure of the great Prince of Orange. The College occupied, in fact, the position of the Embassy of a foreign power, the occupants of which are, while within its precincts, amenable only to their own laws.

The "town and gown" amenities of the Universities on the other side of the Channel had their parallel in the relations existing between the "Collegians" and the Roman Catholic citizens of Dublin. Rows and riots were of frequent occurrence; but this was in Ireland, and in Ireland it was generally understood that no such good feeling exists as that which has been cemented by bloodshed. The City was proud of the spirit displayed by the "Trinity boys," and enjoyed a friendly fight with them every now and again; and certainly if it was possible to write a complete history of the freaks and fun (of the Irish type) that originated within the precincts of the College during half a century, there would be no difficulty in believing that the gaiety (of the Irish type) of Dublin would have suffered an eclipse if the students had not contributed to it out of their own inexhaustible stores.

But the strain of providing vivacious novelties for the entertainment of an appreciative people, though tolerably severe, did not interfere greatly with the culture of that spirit of intolerance which the youth of the ascendancy felt it to be their duty to maintain; and when such an element exists behind closed doors it is apt to work as an explosive does in confinement. The classification of the students provided a ready means by which an ascendancy within an ascendancy could be cultivated, and thus afford a vent without opening the College doors for the expansion of the vanity of those

who were disposed to be arrogant. There were three grades of students—fellow-commoners, pensioners, and sizars; and these represented grades of rank, not of scholarship—they did not even represent comparisons of social rank, but only comparisons of opulence. The fellow-commoners paid about double the amount of fees of the second grade, while the sizars escaped with a small charge. But the privilege paid for by the fellow-commoners included the wearing of a cap with a tassel, dining with the Fellows, and some less striking perquisites; the pensioners were only allowed the ordinary privileges of the College, but the sizars were compelled to wear the stuff gown and cap of a servitor and to perform the duties of a housemaid upstairs and those of the mediæval scullion or kitchen knave in the Fellows' hall.

This system has worked indifferently well at other Universities, and the list of sizars who have attained distinction in many directions is a long one. But no list is available of those poor and high-spirited youths who could not bring themselves to submit to the badges of a menial and to the certainty of hourly humiliations, and who consequently were compelled to forego the longed-for privileges of a University training, to place a curb upon their legitimate ambition, and to turn into some uncongenial walk of life with no chance of distinction in the end.

However the system worked elsewhere, at Trinity College Dublin during the middle years of the eighteenth century the position of a sizar could never have been otherwise than a constant source of humiliation to the student who held it. The Irish youth has ever been high-spirited, and in the eighteenth century the prejudice against engaging in any work that was not considered "fit for a gentleman" was practically universal. The professions were sneered at, with the exception of that of arms and that of the Church; an attorney-at-law was looked on in Ireland pretty much as a negro is in the Southern States of America; a physician was on a social level with a horse-dealer; and as a matter of course any man connected however remotely with commerce would never presume to sit down in the same room as "a gentleman." These were the views not merely of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland but of the Catholic decadents. They joined hands

on these social questions of grade, and they had even a variety of grades of gentleman. They had "a gentleman," "a real gentleman," "a gentleman to the backbone," and two or three other varieties. From their earliest years the gentry had been educated in these class distinctions, and lost no opportunity of showing by their sneers and gibes at their "inferiors" that in this form of education they had perfected themselves, however neglectful they might be of what they ridiculed as "book learning."

Under conditions of companionship with such young men, it can easily be understood that the life led by the sizars of Trinity College must have been one of constant mortification. To be sure, it may be said that the discipline of servitude is excellent for a boy, and that if one is earnest in his desire to educate himself, he will not mind sweeping out passages with a broom or carrying up dishes of meat from the kitchen. A good many of the sizars were made of such stuff as caused them to be indifferent to any suggestion of degradation while discharging their duties; there are thousands of men in England to-day who are quite indifferent to the shame of working with a gang in a prison yard. But what of the others? What of the man with some sense of self-respect, with some feeling?

We know something of what Oliver Goldsmith must have suffered in these years, because we know how extremely sensitive he was at all times—so sensitive as to make it impossible for him to listen to the whine of a beggar without responding to it, even though he knew that the appeal came to him from an impostor. He suffered daily and almost hourly. He was ridiculed by the students who were graded above him, and taunted by a savage named Wilder who was the Fellow under whom he had entered the University. His life must have been miserable while at this College, whose greatest claim to distinction is, in the eyes of a good number of people in the world to-day, to be derived from Oliver Goldsmith's connection with it. Nearly a hundred years after his death the authorities of this seat of learning became aware of the fact that their Goldsmith connection was one of their most valuable assets, so to speak; and now a statue of smooth beauty, possessing few characteristic features of Goldsmith, stands in his

honour within the College gates. Oxford was more consistent in regard to its expelled Shelley, for it only admitted his Memorial to a place where it was hoped no one would see it. Oxford had the spirit of the decayed gentlewoman, who cried her muffins in so low a voice that she hoped no one would hear her.

Only now and again are we made aware of all that Oliver Goldsmith suffered at College. He was never extravagant in his abuse of any one—he was especially moderate in the case of any one who had abused him; and he was ready to forget any injury done to him; but one passage in a letter written to his brother regarding the education of a nephew gives us a momentary glimpse of his feeling respecting the system of which he was a victim at Trinity College. If your son "has ambition, strong passions, and an exquisite sensibility of contempt," he wrote, "do not send him to your college, unless you have no other trade for him except your own." In the same letter, however, he takes care to be just, admitting that at Trinity College "the industrious poor have good encouragement, perhaps better than any other in Europe." But the system he strongly condemns in a paragraph in his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning*. Under the conditions it imposes it is an anomaly "that men should be at once learning the liberal arts, and at the same time treated as slaves; at once studying freedom and practising servitude."

If, however, it could be shown that the end justified the means in Goldsmith's case—that he acquired during his sizarship a large amount of scholarship at the expense of a little dignity—we should not feel so greatly inclined to sympathise with him. But his sizarship did not mean scholarship. His toil in the class-rooms was that to which the Romans applied the word *ærumna*. It was dispiriting. He could have done much better as a student at home. In the letter to his brother from which we have just quoted, he says—and we cannot doubt that he had his own case in his mind:

"It is impossible to conceive how much may be done by a proper education at home. A boy, for instance, who

understands perfectly well Latin, French, arithmetic, and the principles of the civil law, and can write a fine hand, has an education that may qualify him for any undertaking. And these parts of learning should be carefully inculcated, let him be designed for whatever calling he will."

The class-room, so far from holding out any attraction, had been made such a place of horror to him that he shunned it. The vulgar savage who presided there bore a name which so aptly suggested his disposition that it might have been invented for him by Oliver Goldsmith himself—Theaker Wilder. He was one of the most notorious of Dublin's bullies, and his reputation in this direction was earned by his acts outside the College as well as in his class-room. It is related of him that upon one occasion he was accidentally brushed by the end of the whip of a hackney coachman, and forthwith he leaped upon the driver and was only prevented from throttling him by the interposition of the crowd that gathered about him. This contemptible representative of the scholarship of the University seemed to have had the instinct of the bully in singling out the small, plain-faced, shy and sensitive sizar to be the object of his malice, and he lost no opportunity of humiliating him in the presence of his classmates. He jeered at him, and encouraged the other students to jeer at him, and when the shy boy became flurried and failed to return a coherent reply to his questions, he mimicked him, and renewed his gibes, the model upon whom his style was founded. being, we fancy, the Jeffreys of Bloody Assize fame.

CHAPTER IV

QUALIFYING FOR A DEGREE

1747—1749

HUMILIATED and discouraged in every way, Oliver Goldsmith neglected his work and became one of the loungers around the College gate. Shut out from the life of the University, and without a friend under its roof, he was driven to the city in search of people with whom he could associate on terms of equality. Such a search need never be fruitless in such a city as Dublin. The College boys have always been popular with the citizens, and naturally the least desirable of these are the most ready to welcome a visitor bearing only the credentials of studentship. It does not appear that Goldsmith made any actually disreputable acquaintance, but it may be taken for granted that he did not make any that would be considered by the University authorities to reflect honour upon his choice.

It was not, however, by reason of his doubtful associates outside the College, but on account of his connection with some of those within its precincts that he found himself one day within measurable distance of expulsion. The incident goes far to show that he must have become almost reckless through his ill-treatment by Wilder.

Bearing out what we have stated respecting the pretensions of the College to be *imperium in imperio*, it seems to have become an understood thing that the King's writ, so far as it referred to arrest for debt, did not run within the entrance gates; but one day in June 1747, either through ignorance or in defiance of this assumption, two bailiffs arrested a student in his rooms, and carried him off to the customary sponging-house. As soon as the news of this infringement of their traditional privileges spread abroad

among the undergraduates they held a very informal meeting, and early the same night sallied out in great force to obtain satisfaction for such an insult. They apparently needed no guide to the likely places where the bailiffs would be found, and having unearthed the chief delinquent, they carried him through the streets and the College gates, and soused him in the cistern beneath the University pump.

This was, however, considered quite too tame an ending for an incident that seemed at the outset so promising of excitement, and these lads of spirit marched forth, announcing their intention of breaking into the old prison known as the Black Dog—a prophetical burlesque of the revolutionary cry that sounded through Europe forty-two years later—"*à la Bastille!*" The result was a riot neither more nor less severe than the usual undergraduate brawl to which the streets of Dublin had for long been accustomed; but some of the townspeople lost their lives, and it was necessary for the College authorities to take cognisance of the unfortunate incident. An investigation was held and it was proved—to the satisfaction, we have no doubt, of Theaker Wilder—that Oliver Goldsmith was mixed up with the business. His connection with it was, however, shown not to have been active; for while several of the students were expelled, he was only admonished in public.

It seems to us that the recklessness which drove him into the thick of the crowd upon this occasion was due to the treatment to which he was constantly subjected by Wilder. His sister wrote that this man had continued to persecute him "with unremitting cruelty; especially at the quarterly examinations, when he would insult him before his fellow students by sarcastic taunts and ironical applauses of the severest malignity." In the early part of the same year also his father died, and he was thus left with no one to whom he had any right to look to defray his College expenses. For some time he must have been absolutely penniless, while his relations were discussing what was to be done with him. It was discovered by his earliest biographers that he had taken to writing ballads—those of the type that, well on into the next century, were hawked in long ill-printed slips through the streets, and sung to popular airs by the vendors. Five

shillings apiece was, it seems, the market price paid to the author for these things. It is quite likely that Goldsmith's were worth their money. At any rate he neglected no opportunity of increasing his qualifications for reaching eminence in this branch of literature; for it is said that he was accustomed to steal out of College at night and, after finding the particular street where his ballads were being sung, to listen to the criticisms of the audience upon the composition. We have no means of learning whether as a rule these were encouraging or otherwise to him. But the money he got by this means was handy—there can be no doubt about that.

The result of the conferences of his relations was that by contributions from all available sources—and they could not have been many—he was enabled to remain at the University, his generous uncle Contarine being as usual the largest contributor to this end. But it may be assumed that it was a starvation dole that passed into the boy's hands. Even with the help of the most munificent patron of his street ballads, he must have felt a step lower down in the scale than the wretches who hawked them in the gutter, until he acquired that recklessness which has driven men of his temperament to the bottle—either the quick one of prussic acid or the slow one of alcohol. It was, we think, under such an influence that he acted when, on winning a thirty-shilling exhibition at the College, he invited a medley crowd from the streets to his room to celebrate the event by a supper. "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die," has ever been the shout of the reckless.

The entertainment took place—at least an instalment of what was promised; but then it took another turn, on the dramatic entrance of Dr. Wilder. What would be the action of the man who had almost throttled to death an able-bodied Dublin Jarvey for an accidental and trifling affront, on bursting into the miserable sizar's room, could not be doubted. His fury took the form of a personal assault upon Oliver Goldsmith. When he had denounced his guests—probably boys and girls of Oliver's own age—Wilder caught him by the collar and beat him unmercifully with his cane without even waiting until his guests had time to disperse.

This incident brought matters to a climax. The next

day he left the College, sold his books and his clothes, and set out for America—he rather thought that America was his destination, but he was not sure. The sequel of the adventure showed that his uncertainty on this point was fully justified. He had doubtless many sympathisers with him in Dublin, and he possibly became aware for the first time of the satisfaction to be derived from listening to unrestrained demonstrations in his favour. We know how easily the friendliness of the Irish becomes emotional, and we know how the language of the emotions becomes progressive in vehemence. Emotion, real or simulated, calls for some form of expression, and the sound of this expression adds fuel to the feelings that inspired it, until the original glow has become a roaring furnace; and the sympathy which, at the outset, took the form of a hearty shake of the hand, needs floods of tears, gesticulation, and overwhelming embraces to do justice to it, when the one who inspired it is at hand—with half-a-crown to expend on refreshment; for such demonstrations are usually exhausting.

We may be sure that Oliver Goldsmith, having freed himself from the tyranny of the College rules, and in the midst of his Dublin circle with a few pounds in his pocket, felt amply consoled for the degradations heaped upon him by the savage Wilder, and proud to belong to a people who could feel so deeply for him. At any rate, he could not tear himself away from them even to go to the American colonies. But possibly finding that the demonstrations were decreasing in sympathy with the decrease of his ready cash, the moment of separation came and he started for America with a shilling in his pocket.

A few days of privation and some of starvation had their effect upon him. (He told Reynolds years afterwards that a handful of grey peas formed the most delicious meal of his lifetime. It was given to him by a girl at a wake in a house on his journey southward.) His expedition terminated at his brother's house in Lissoy. Years afterwards he wrote:

> Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
> My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee;
> Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain
> And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.

Blest be that spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire:
Blest that abode, where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair:
Blest be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale;
Or press the bashful stranger to his food
And learn the luxury of doing good.

The man who wrote *The Traveller* "where Alpine solitudes ascend" may have had in his mind at that moment a vivid recollection of the end of his first expedition.

His brother Henry had not succeeded to the living of Kilkenny West on the death of their father; it is said that he reoccupied the curate's house at Pallas; but it is probable that it was at the Lissoy parsonage, which remained in the family, having been taken by the Daniel Hodson who had married Catherine, that the brothers met at this time, and the younger was wisely advised to forget the Wilder incident and return to Dublin. It is stated by his sister that a *rapprochement* was established by the intervention of Henry between Oliver and his tutor; it was, she says, "something of a reconciliation," and the phrase was a happy one. It was a reconciliation of a kind—the kind that is brought about between a prisoner and his jailer when the former has escaped from his cell and is brought back. Such a man as Wilder does not change his nature in a day; he had now additional grounds for taunting his pupil, and it is impossible for us to think that he failed to perceive how he stood in this respect. The only means by which such a savage can be tamed were forthcoming a few years later. He was engaged in a drunken brawl with some boon companions, and got knocked on the head. Such an end to such a man must have long been foreseen. He was taken by the enemy for a sizar and treated with no more courtesy than he had shown to such wretches as were compelled to come in contact with him.

It is pretty certain that Oliver Goldsmith referred at some length to his College life in a confidential memoir which Bishop Percy persuaded him to write. But in this matter he

was as unfortunate as usual; for Percy, believing that Johnson was the man to write the life of his old friend, put the manuscript into Johnson's hands. That was the last that any one connected with the transaction saw of it, for Johnson was so little impressed with a sense of its importance that he forgot all about it, and on inquiry being made by Percy respecting the document, failed to find it, and it has not been found since. Johnson most likely laid it down in some coffee-house to engage in the brow-beating of a friend, and the importance of adding to his many controversial victories engrossed his attention to the exclusion of minor matters. These chapters from the autobiography of Oliver Goldsmith dealing with his College life would certainly have formed one of the most interesting documents ever printed. They probably lit the fire in the common room of the "Mitre" tavern.

But one may be sure that Goldsmith did not treat Wilder as he had been treated by that person. We know how gentle was his scheme of *Retaliation* when the chance was offered to him. He would probably have dismissed this man with a few lines of half-serious banter. The only story that he told to Percy respecting his treatment by Wilder is against himself rather than against Wilder.

During the remainder of his course at the University he had many opportunities of practising that vicious benevolence which he had inherited from his father. Various anecdotes survive to show that he was quite as foolish in this respect in Dublin as he was in later years in London. The Irish beggars knew him well, and the man who could not hold out against the importunities of a London mendicant had little chance when face to face with an Irish one. He gave away the very garments off his back when his slender store of cash was exhausted, as were his borrowing powers and the patience of his friends. Upon one occasion he actually brought down his bed-clothes to a poor woman who told him a piteous story, and he was thus forced to cut open his bed and make a nest for himself among the feathers. It is doubtful if he really felt that he was a fool before the morning, though he may have had a suspicion of it as the temperature decreased.

It must have been a sorry day for the beggars of Dublin when Oliver Goldsmith took his degree of Bachelor of Arts

on February 7, 1749—two years later than it was possible for him to have graduated, though even then he was only a few months past twenty.

It is scarcely possible to believe that any graduate of the University of Dublin ever got through the usual course with less distinction than was achieved by Oliver Goldsmith, or, indeed, we may add, having acquired a less amount of what is termed scholarship. It was not during his stay at Trinity that he formed that acquaintance with the classics which, without ever degenerating into actual scholarship, was tolerably intimate, and, as we have suggested in a previous chapter, convenient to be held by one who was constantly mingling with scholars. Of many other subjects he had a journeyman's knowledge, not a master's. He was not highly scientific in any of his investigations, nor was he highly critical when regarded from the standpoint of a critic; he was only a common-sense critic of life and literature and the drama; he was never anything higher in this way; and the consequence is that he never ceases to be interesting, though he sometimes may cease to be accurate. Scholarship is progressive, science never stands still for a moment, and even criticism advances. The scholars of to-day smile at those of yesterday. The scientific men of to-morrow will spend most of their time correcting the mistakes of those of to-day, and the critics of the day after will probably reverse all the decisions of their predecessors. But the man who was human a thousand years ago is as human to-day when he speaks to human beings; and that is how it comes that the sentences of Goldsmith and Shakespeare and a few others are set in the language of the English people—jewels in a cincture that binds worlds together.

He left the University without having deteriorated by his connection with it; and that was something. If he had found in its class-room sympathetic teachers, he might have received such encouragement as would have caused him to become a scholar and nothing more. Happily he escaped that fate, though only at the cost of some years of discomfort and humiliation. If he had become a great scholar he would have written differently: scholarship might possibly have been the richer, but the world would certainly have been the poorer.

Several men who afterwards reached positions of some distinction were at Trinity College at the same time as Goldsmith, and lived to boast of the fact. But what did their boast amount to? Why, simply to a confession that they were as incapable as their teachers of recognising promise in an unaccustomed form. It is the appearance of the Unaccustomed that frightens the authorities. These conservators of the Normal have always shaken at the apparition of the Unusual, and at Trinity College in Goldsmith's day their example was followed by the rank and file of the class-rooms. These fellow-students of his were not to be blamed for any want of capacity or want of discernment in the matter. Boys do not go to College in order to hunt for geniuses in country-cut clothes, and with pock-marked faces. They only seek to get through the necessary years with as little trouble as possible; and the majority spend their time in an endeavour to find out what is actually the smallest amount of knowledge that will satisfy their examiners. Besides, the mathematical *alumni* will at any time, by reference to their statistics, be able to show them that if one is on the search for genius, it is not within the precincts of a University that one has much chance of finding it.

Flood, one of the many great Irish orators, was a fellow-commoner at Trinity when Goldsmith was there, but he admitted that he had never seen anything of the sizar. Edmund Burke, however, who was there for at least two of Goldsmith's years, said he recollected perfectly well seeing him, but that was all. Several bishops, too, were accustomed, after Goldsmith's death, to talk of the dear old Trinity days when he had been in the same class-room with them. They did not say whether or not they had joined in the laughter that greeted Wilder's sallies at his expense. The claims of early acquaintanceship with men who have become great are as ancient as the places that competed for the honour of being the birthplace of Homer, "Through which the living Homer begged his bread." The list of the men who were at College with Goldsmith is simply the list of men who had a chance of making him their friend but neglected it. The truth is that he was not in the right "set," and to get into the wrong "set" at Trinity College Dublin, was to be guilty of an irretrievable mistake. It is to be feared that in Dublin

City the social position of his acquaintances did not show any marked contrast to that of his College associates. It seemed quite plausible to him that a village clergyman should during his travels allow himself to become the guest of a pack of domestics masquerading as the owners of the house where they were in service. It is quite likely that this experience of Dr. Primrose had once been his own. No man could be more easily imposed upon than he was, and certainly no man submitted with a better grace to be the victim of an imposition. His view of the humour of a situation was quite an impersonal one. He could never see that because the laugh was against himself he should not join in it. He never could see that the humour of a situation was affected by the accident of the part of the over-credulous simpleton being played by himself. If he never did actually exchange a good horse for a gross of green spectacles with silver rims and in shagreen cases, he certainly engaged in many equally shrewd transactions, and he seemed not merely to take the exposure in good part, but to be thoroughly amused at the figure he cut as the victim of Mr. Jenkinson or even a less astute impostor. In this respect he differed considerably from the general run of people who thoroughly enjoy seeing their nearest neighbour imposed upon, but fail to perceive the humourous aspects of being victimised themselves.

And so Oliver Goldsmith left the University and began his education in the world.

CHAPTER V

QUALIFYING FOR IMMORTALITY

1749—1752

THE next three years Oliver Goldsmith passed in what one of his biographers calls "idleness." They were the most important years of his whole life. Beyond a doubt it was during these years that he became the Oliver Goldsmith who wrote the most natural English that ever came from a poet, a novelist, a dramatist, or an essayist—the Oliver Goldsmith who, before the days when his ability as a writer was recognised by the world, became the friend and beloved companion of some of the greatest men in England. It was during these years of idleness that he was qualifying for the inheritance which became his without his asking for it.

It is not alone Goldsmith's style as a writer that places him in the front rank of the men of his own century; it is his possessing something behind his style, which goes by the name of genius; and the truth is forced upon us that it was just during these years of "idleness" that his genius had a chance of coming to life, so to speak—of "taking possession" of him: the temptation to use the analogy of the form that was adopted in accounting for demoniac possession is too strong to be resisted when one is considering the question of the development of genius. It was in these idle years that he learned, though without realising it, all that was necessary for him to learn. It was during these years that he acquired his way of looking at things, his perfect sense of proportion, so that he never shocks by exaggerating any detail—his grasp of character and of incident—that happy appreciation of the mingling of the elements of seriousness and comedy in daily life—of the comedy of vanity, and the humour of pretence—of the divine beauty of simplicity and of the subtleties of unconscious

hypocrisy—he learned much in these years; and incidentally he learned, a good many people will think, how long-suffering may be the relatives of a genius who is gifted, apparently, with an unlimited capacity for idling. The entertainment of an angel unawares is an experience that falls to the lot of some people now and again; but all our recollection of incidents that have been so described tends to arouse our sympathy for the *entrepreneurs*, and to induce us to feel that they were not greatly to blame for being unaware of the fact that their visitants were of celestial origin. It is the same in regard to the entertaining of a genius. One would like to be on the side of the angels and on the side of the geniuses, but not when it comes to the practical business of entertainment.

Such a life as he led at this time would scarcely have been possible had he lived in England or in Scotland; but Ireland had for centuries been the field of the vagrant—the home of the thriftless—the paradise of the lazy. On the other side of the channel there might be a village here and there with its habitual idler, a young fellow whose many neglected opportunities of "doing well" were daily commented on by the occupants of the ale-house settle when he had slouched out of the room, and whose thriftlessness was the burden of the complaints of the people at whose expense he was living. Such men are not unknown in England and—but much more rarely—in Scotland even in the present age of "get on or get off." But in Ireland there is scarcely a village where some examples of the thriftless type may not still be found, though the famines of the past century have done much to thin them down. In Goldsmith's time the conditions of life in the villages were such as gave a youth who was so inclined a chance of realising the loafer's ideal heaven whose inhabitants "go on doing nothing for ever and ever." The village was a commune. Public opinion was strenuously opposed to every system of saving; and the man who had a guinea felt as bound to share it with his neighbours as does a schoolboy to make an equal division of the contents of his hamper from home in the dormitory. It was accounted not merely ungracious but unnatural as well for any family to slaughter a pig without distributing portions of the carcase all round the place. A present of fish from the river or the lake was made an excuse

for a feast from which none was excluded, and a gift of game from the squire to the parson was equivalent to a donation to the whole village—so far as it went.

It can easily be believed that, becoming accustomed to these conditions of life, Oliver Goldsmith could scarcely fail to have strengthened those habits of thriftlessness and benevolence which he had inherited from his father. Borrowing from one person to lend to another became part of his nature. Running into debt in order to supply the wants of people who had no claim whatever upon his charity, spending money lavishly when he had earned it only with the greatest difficulty—these were the habits which he acquired during his idle years in Ireland, and which clung to him for the rest of his life, and finally strangled him after dragging him more than once down into the deepest depths of misery and humiliation. That constant borrowing which marked his career in London cannot but have shocked his English friends and associates, who were unacquainted with the fact that in Ireland it was as natural for a man who wanted money to borrow it from a neighbour, as it was for him to lend it, if he chanced to have it, when it came to be his neighbour's turn to borrow. There was no question of shame or shyness or humiliation in such transactions, as Goldsmith had learned to conduct them in his native Ireland; and to his dying day he never quite mastered those elements of the science of economics which show with absolute lucidity—to a logical minded man—the unsoundness of the Irish system, even without the need to bring forward the condition of the Irish people as an example of its failure. When a man is in need of money the easiest way of getting it is for him to borrow it from his neighbour; and Oliver Goldsmith, being brought up as one of the most easy-going people in the world, allowed economics to go by the board while he went to his neighbour. That was how he came to die in penury, at the age of forty-six, when he was actually earning more money than any man who lived by literature in his day.

But in considering any question, economical or ethical, in connection with the life of a man of genius, one finds oneself constantly puzzled what view to take and to suggest that others should take, of his conduct—his foolish-

ness, his thriftlessness, his idleness, and even his vices. (Without his vices the world would never have known that many a man was a genius.) Can we reasonably say that it was a great pity that Oliver Goldsmith had not more "ballast"? (That is what some one has said about him; forgetting that ballast is a worthless material which is put into an empty ship to give it stability when no goods of any value are stowed aboard it.) If he had had more ballast he would have taken high honours at the University, and perhaps, with good luck, have become a dignified nonentity in a country rectory. That is the fate of the men with "ballast." Can we wish that he had been taught practical economics instead of vicious benevolence by his father? In that case he might have gone into the grocery business, and by judicious adulterations have acquired a competence, with the certainty of an afternoon doze in a warm back-parlour. Can we wish that he had had a stern father instead of an easy-going one? In that case he might have lived till he was eighty, but we should have had no *Vicar of Wakefield*. Can we wish, in short, that he had been otherwise than he was? In that case we should have had no Oliver Goldsmith.

It is indeed impossible to say, in reviewing the lives of men of genius, that it was a great pity they were not "steady" or high principled, or living under different conditions, or more happily married, or with a sounder digestion. We cannot even wish that they had been less foolish at times, or more constant in their loves, or less frequently fooled by plain women. We have no great hesitation in speaking definitely regarding ordinary men: if they neglect their opportunities we can safely denounce them; if they are bad husbands we have a right to shake our heads at them; if they are thriftless we can give them good advice; and if they are failures we can send them to the devil and have done with them. But we can only accept the fruits of a genius and be thankful.

The worst of this matter of genius and its freaks is that we have no means of differentiating on the spot between the freaks of a genius and the freaks of a fool; and thus it is we find that the people who were in touch with a man who turned out to be a genius, treated him as if he were an ordinary person,

capable of being reasoned with and given good advice founded upon a long experience of the commonplace. Such people are certainly not to be blamed by posterity if it is recorded that they regarded his aberrations with suspicion or even with contempt. But no charge of having adopted an aggressive attitude toward Oliver Goldsmith during his years of idleness, when he lived upon their bounty, could ever be brought against his relations. On the contrary, it must seem to many persons acquainted only with life in English villages, that they treated him with an amount of generosity that was absolutely reprehensible. But, we repeat, the custom in Ireland was, and still is in some localities, to give every idler a chance of pursuing a career of idleness; and only very rarely does such an one fail to take advantage of the laxity of his friends. It does not appear to have occurred to any of his relations that when Oliver Goldsmith came among them they might have turned a cold shoulder to him or suggested to him the advisability of taking up some employment for a living. To be sure he must even then have been a lively and entertaining young man. But liveliness is not a livelihood. If it were, few Irishmen would be without a competence. But even if he had been dull as an Ulsterman—the very antithesis to an Irishman—he would still have been allowed "the run of the kitchen," to make use of the local idiom, in every house in the neighbourhood of Lissoy and Ballymahon. He had "a fine time of it" during these years he spent on his round of visits.

It would appear that, on his leaving the University, there was a consultation at Ballymahon, where his widowed mother now lived in a small cottage, on the subject of his future—not his immediate future, of course, for it was taken for granted that that must be indefinite, but his future so far as a profession was concerned. He belonged to a family of clergymen. His father had enjoyed for thirteen years an income of forty pounds, and his brother was at that moment living up to the same standard of luxury. With such examples of the rewards offered by a devotion to the service of the Church, it must have seemed strange to his friends that he should reject the proposal made to him by his uncle and other members of his family, that he should take holy orders, resisting even the temptation of possible emoluments on the same scale as that which may

have become the family tradition. The genial frankness of the confessions of a certain "Man in Black" are very useful to a biographer who fails to fathom the mystery of his turning away from the rosy prospect offered to him by the Church: "To be obliged to wear a long wig when I liked a short one, or a black coat when I generally dressed in brown, I thought such a restraint upon my liberty that I absolutely rejected the proposal" (to become a parson), confessed the autobiographical "Man in Black."

One is relieved to find that his unwillingness to associate himself with the Church was not due to the influence of any heterodox views on his part, acquired since he had signed the Articles in the form required by his College. He was neither an Agnostic nor a Freethinker—Dr. Johnson would probably have said about him as he did of Foote, that he had not been a thinker at all on the subject of doctrine. He certainly felt, however, that his own disinclination to enter the Church should not weigh against the advice of a relative to whom he owed so much as he did to his uncle Contarine; and so he eventually agreed to prepare for holy orders.

And this is how he set about it:

From his mother's cottage he put himself in touch with every social movement in connection with the intellectual life at Ballymahon, becoming chairman of a club of young men, who foregathered formally once a week and as often as possible informally at the village ale-house to make merry with song and music and, we doubt not—for Ballymahon is in the heart of Ireland—with dance, to swop stories and to drink punch. One of his few College friends, Robert Bryanton, a sort of cousin, who lived in the neighbourhood, and had a fine taste in whisky, became his constant companion, supporting him—when not in actual need of physical support himself—in the chair on club nights and going for long walks with him along the banks of the river or the lake, hunting the otter with him, and fishing for trout. Who were the other members of the club it is not easy to say—even if their names were known we should be no wiser; but of what type they were, no one who knows Ireland can have much doubt. It has been suggested that *The Three Pigeons* owed its existence to Conway's ale-house, and that the "several shabby fellows" who were

"discovered" "with punch and tobacco" at the former, were suggested by the company at the latter. But we cannot think that Mr. Muggins and Mr. Slang—the fellow who couldn't bear anything that was low, and who though "obligated to dance a bear," felt that "a man may be a gentleman for all that," and would never permit the animal to dance "but to the very genteelest of tunes; 'Water Parted' or the Minuet in *Ariadne*"—we cannot think that these entertaining persons ever entered the club-room except perhaps for a few minutes. No, full of gentlemanly feeling and all though they may have been, they were not of the club. The young men who drank their punch and sang their songs and had their rubbers of whist together were more of the type of Bob Bryanton and Dan Hodson, the sons of well-to-do people in the neighbourhood. But all the same his intimacy with them and the reputation which he may have gained for singing a good song, dancing a jig, playing the flute, or even for the general soundness of his decisions when any nice question of decorum was submitted to him as chairman, could not possibly turn the balance in his favour should any moderately scrupulous prelate be uncertain as to his qualifications for taking orders.

It could not be suggested, however, that the possession of these qualities would cause his immediate rejection, for just about this time a French dancing-master who had retired from the active work of his profession endeavoured to get some influential friends to do something for him in Ireland and put him on an easy way of living. Several situations were proposed for him, but it was found that he was amazingly disqualified to fill any one of them. At last a happy idea occurred to his patron: Why not put him into the Church? The man was ordained in a month and presented with a good living.

But it must not be supposed that Oliver Goldsmith devoted himself exclusively to the advancement of the interests of the Ballymahon ale-house club. He acted as his mother's housekeeper for some time, and the experience that he gained in this capacity must have been valuable to him in checking the bills of his London landlady in after years. The exact extent of the transactions with which he was associated in the Bally-

mahon *ménage* may be gauged by reference to some of the pages of an account-book bought by Mr. Shaw Mason at an auction at that town. This is an example given in 1818 by that industrious collector of Goldsmith statistics:

Mrs. Goldsmith to Sarah Shore. Dr.

		s.	*d.*
	Brought forward	15	6
Jan. 16.	Half an ounce of green tea	0	3½
	A quarter of a pound of lump sugar	0	3
	A pound of Jamaica sugar	0	8
	An ounce of green tea	0	7
	Half a pound of rice	0	2
	A quarter of an ounce of green tea	0	2

This example of the *res angusta domi* of his Irish years may be compared with his later transactions with Mrs. Fleming, his Islington landlady.

It has been assumed that during the years he was waiting to qualify (by age) for his ordination, he helped his brother Henry at the school which the latter had started. Perhaps he did; but we have our doubts on this point. We are strongly inclined to believe that his brother kept him on the other side of the schoolhouse door. Oliver Goldsmith detested teaching boys, and it is difficult to believe that the school was so large as to need a second master. No; any attempt to make out that he was "usefully employed"—that is the phrase which his apologists would use—at this time must be received with caution. But he was qualifying to become the Oliver Goldsmith of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the Oliver Goldsmith of *She Stoops to Conquer*, the Oliver Goldsmith of *The Deserted Village*, the Oliver Goldsmith of the flute-playing tour through Europe; so that, on consideration, we are bound to confess that he was usefully employed during these years of probation.

His long walks, sometimes with Bob Bryanton but more frequently alone, through the country and by the sedges of the lake, gave him a love of Nature and developed his powers of observation. He acquired more than a sportsman's knowledge of ornithology, and he used it to advantage when he had an

opportunity. His paper on insect life proved that he was a close observer, and he was able to strike out for himself independent of, and indeed in opposition to, Buffon when he wrote of the habits of the otter.

It is also likely that during these years he came in contact with many persons who had had an intimate acquaintance with a man who was certainly something of a musical genius. This was Carolan, the Irish harper, a truly remarkable person, about whose powers Irish tradition absolutely glows. Indeed, considering how many patrons Carolan had in Roscommon, it is possible that Goldsmith had heard him when a child. It must be accounted somewhat strange that Ireland, which in mediæval times was known all over Europe as the home of bards, should yet have given birth to no really great poet or musician within the years of its subjugation. From those national melodies which have survived to the present day, mainly through the exertions of Bunting and of Thomas Moore, who wrote some exquisite lyrics to suit them, and occasionally, we believe, took undue liberties with the music to accommodate it to his metres, we know that there must have been composers of the greatest power in the old days; but the English-writing poets have never shown more than a mediocre ability. Great executants on any musical instrument have never been of Irish birth, possibly because the national instrument, the harp, had small capabilities beyond those needed as an accompaniment to a singer. The bard Carolan was both a composer and a performer far above the average of his own day, though probably inferior in every way to Bunting, who lived well into the nineteenth century. Goldsmith devotes one of his essays to this man, and tells the anecdote of Carolan's being the guest of a nobleman in the country and meeting one evening a distinguished English violinist, challenged him after the manner of mediæval bards, to a contest of skill. "To carry the jest forward," wrote Goldsmith, "his lordship persuaded the musician to accept the challenge, and he accordingly played over on his fiddle the Fifth Concerto of Vivaldi. Carolan, immediately taking his harp, played over the piece after him, without missing a note, though he had never heard it before; which produced some surprise; but their astonishment increased when he assured them that he

could make a concerto in the same taste himself, which he instantly composed, and that with such spirit and elegance, that it may compare (for we have it still) with the finest compositions of Italy."

This tradition, which, in its exaggeration, is thoroughly characteristic of most traditions of the country, must have impressed Goldsmith when it first came under his notice during these years of idleness—except of observation and development; his recollection of it after a long lapse of time helps to show in how many directions his sympathies tended when he had plenty of leisure for thinking and for feeling.

But in a letter which he wrote long afterwards to Daniel Hodson he shows that he had never been under any illusions as to the desirability of Ireland as a place of abode for a man of some culture and intellect; though he wrote of it with all the feeling of an Irishman for Ireland when he is living away from it. He thinks it unaccountable that a man should have an affection for a place, when he "never received when in it above common civility, who never brought anything out of it except his brogue and his blunders. . . . Let me ask myself what gives me a wish to see Ireland again? The country is a fine one perhaps? No. There are good company in Ireland? No. . . . Then perhaps there's more wit and learning among the Irish? Oh, Lord, no. There has been more money spent in the encouragement of the Padareen mare in one season than given in rewards to learned men since the time of Usher. All their productions in learning amount to perhaps a translation, or a few tracts in divinity; and all their productions in wit, to just nothing at all."

He had very little idea when he was writing this letter that the pen which he held was to contribute so largely to the removal of the reproaches he directed against Ireland in respect of wit and culture and good company.

But though it suited him in this letter to write as if he were suggesting that no good thing could be found in Ireland—he ended it in the best Irish style by explaining his fondness for the undesirable island on the grounds that his dear brother-in-law and a few other people whom he loved were still there—he was fully appreciative of the humours of the people among whom he had lived for over twenty

years. His plays and his books are full of Irish character and Irish humour; and he had himself come away from the island in full possession of many of the ways and traits of the Irish people. It would, perhaps, have been better for himself if he had had fewer. If, for instance, he had been able to get rid of that conversational idiom which is quite common in almost every part of Ireland, but is scarcely known in England—that most subtle species of irony which so bewildered, not only Boswell, but many of his other associates in London, he would not have run the chance of being so greatly misunderstood and misrepresented as he was. It need only be noted in this place that among the fruits of these years of mingling with the people of Ireland, his acquiring this particular idiom must be given a prominent place. It will be more convenient to deal with this matter when we are considering the consequences of his indiscriminate exercise of this curious form of Irish humour; as a form of Irish humour it undoubtedly must be accepted, though as Goldsmith was the Irishman who employed it for his own diversion and his own undoing in England to a far greater extent than any other Irishman, it might almost be called "Goldsmith's idiom."

So the years of his probation passed and he was fully qualified (by age) to present himself as a candidate for Holy Orders.

Perhaps he may have had some misgivings as to what the result would be; but he had lived long enough in Ireland to become aware of the liberality of the prelates of the Established Church in passing candidates who were even more grossly unqualified than himself to bring credit to the cloth, and so he had no reason to be absolutely certain that he would be rejected. He may have kept up his spirits by his knowledge of the fact that he was going before a bishop who was known to be conscientious and even scrupulous in the discharge of his duty. He may have elected to go before the Bishop of Elphin on this account, so as to increase his chances of rejection; and he may even have made assurance doubly sure by appearing before his lordship, as Dr. Strean said he did, in crimson breeches; but this was surely an unnecessary precaution to take: he was certainly so amply disqualified in other respects that he had no need to resort to

so glaring an evidence of his unsuitability. Oliver Goldsmith's putting on crimson breeches for this occasion would be like a squat actor of sixty going to play the part of Romeo, and taking the trouble to get himself up as King Lear.

He was not kept long in suspense. The Bishop of Elphin fully justified the confidence which he had placed in his discretion by rejecting his application.

CHAPTER VI

A CONSTANT PRODIGAL

1752

It is, however, one thing for a man who, knowing himself to have no "bent" in the direction of the Church as a profession, to come out from the presence of the examiner with a laugh in his sleeve, but it is quite another matter for this man to go smilingly back to the relations who have been supporting him for several years—much longer than their combined opulence could afford.

It is not to be supposed that even Bob Bryanton congratulated Oliver Goldsmith on the result of his interview with the bishop, though Goldsmith must have been a companion with whom he could ill dispense from his country strolls, or the ale-house hearth. As for his poor mother, and his brother, and sister, and uncle, to say nothing of his brother-in-law and his other relations, they must all have looked askance at him when he made his appearance among them with the story of his failure on his face. But the scene of the comedy was laid in Ireland, and there was no outburst of indignation against a man who had failed, though we do not doubt that, Irishlike, the innocent bishop was thoroughly denounced, and his scruples sneered at; nor would there be any lack in the memory of some of the circle, of notorious instances of men being accepted for orders who were far more highly disqualified for the Church than poor Oliver. It is he himself in his character of the "Man in Black" who tells us that at every signal proof which he gave of his incapacity to succeed in life, his relations only said that it was a pity, for he had not a bit of harm in him. Certainly more long-suffering relations than those with whom Goldsmith was blessed, the most persistent idler could never wish to have at his back. Nothing seemed

to put these good people out. No word of reproach did any of them address to him. The chances really are that they believed him to be one of the most unfortunate young men in the three counties; but so far as his relations were concerned he was one of the most fortunate of men, and possibly this was the worst position that a young man of his temperament could find himself in. Possibly if he had had the doors of Ballymahon and Lissoy shut in his face he would have developed that backbone which, under the stress of similar circumstances, other men with a liking for a simple life of independence at the expense of some one else, have suddenly found themselves to possess, though previously, having had no occasion to give any thought to their position among vertibrates, they had not suspected its existence. But here one finds oneself applying the steel-yard standard, which was made for the ordinary, to the abnormal—applying the ordeal of the Pix to a pixie. It would be about as reasonable to prescribe a schoolboy's regimen to a fairy as to say with any degree of definiteness what would have been good for Oliver Goldsmith. Even allowing that a glimpse of closed doors, offered to him on his return from his interview with the Bishop of Elphin, would have given him the backbone which we hear is so essential to any one striving to reach that vague and ever-shifting goal known as success in life, the world would have had no Oliver Goldsmith, for Oliver Goldsmith with a backbone would not be the Oliver Goldsmith whom we know.

Perhaps, on the whole, one would be safest in affirming that a little sternness on the part of his relatives would have made a man of him. Yes, it might have made a man of him; but fortunately that consummation was never achieved. He remained a child to the end of his life The spectacle of one who belonged wholly to the realm of fancy going before the Bishop of Elphin praying for ordination and a fat living is to our eyes a grotesque one. It suggests Titania's wooing of Bottom. If the Elphin Bishop had spelt the name of his see phonetically Goldsmith would have had a chance.

He was back in his brother's house, and once more there was a consultation, and, as usual, the good Uncle Contarine came to his help, though there is really no reason to believe

that he was calling for help in a louder tone than a whisper. But Uncle Contarine was truly kind. He saw that his nephew had had a long enough spell of idleness. He had in his pocket an offer from a gentleman of some position in his neighbourhood, who stood in need of a tutor for his sons, with no prejudices against taking a hand at cards when he was wanted. His relations took great care that the offer of such an appointment was not rejected; and Oliver entered upon his duties as speedily as possible. What he taught or whom he taught in the house of this Mr. Flinn, we have no means of learning; but after remaining in the situation for a year he quitted it at a moment's notice, after accusing some member of the household of cheating at cards.

He had, however, done very well for himself—we are not in a position to speak for his pupils—during his term of tutorship. Very different indeed was his condition now from that which had been his when he had first entered the house. He had thirty guineas in his pocket, the result of his teaching or of his card-playing, or of both, and in addition he had a good horse. So that on the whole, we do not think that he had reason to complain of any want of liberality on the part of Mr. Flinn.

On riding to the house of one of his relations and giving them his account of the final scene at the Flinns', it would appear that he did not get quite so warm a welcome as he expected; and after a very brief stay in his mother's cottage, he turned his horse's head southward and rode straight to the City of Cork.

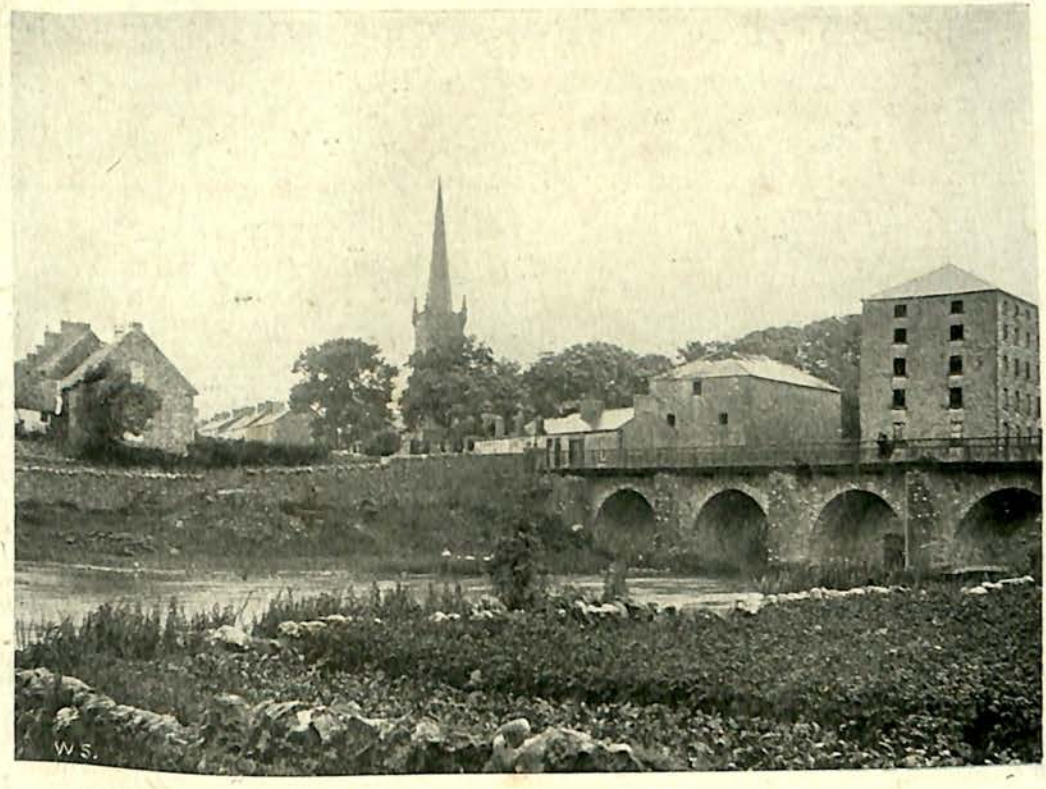
Of course, the story of how he parted from the Flinns quickly came to the ears of all the Goldsmith connection, and they were doubtless shaking their heads and saying it was a great pity, because there was no harm in him and he was certainly very good-natured, while they looked up and down the road expecting to see the figure of the solitary horseman returning to lodge with them for an indefinite period. But when he did not appear after the lapse of a day or two, they began to feel uneasy, and when weeks went by without any tidings reaching them of his whereabouts and his intentions, they became alarmed. Previously, we fancy, they were alarmed at the prospect of having to put up with him

for another year or two. His sister, Catherine Hodson, tells of the trouble they were all in; but what we should like would be a report of the views of the various members of the family in regard to this episode in his life. Did any of them imagine that he felt so strongly that he had made a fool of himself that he could not face them? Or did any one suggest that at last he had found sense, and had made up his mind not to run the chance of frittering away his thirty pounds at Ballymahon?

Some explanation is needed in regard to his conduct in this transaction. But it never will be forthcoming. It was most unlike Goldsmith to make such a move as was attributed to him; but the sequel cannot be so described. On the contrary, it was eminently characteristic of Oliver Goldsmith; for one morning, six weeks after he had shaken the dust of the Flinns' avenue off his feet, he entered Ballymahon village—a solitary figure on horseback, but not the heroic figure which had been looked for when it was known that he had been gallantly mounted and with a pouchfull of gold. In place of his good horse he was astride of a miserable animal that could scarcely carry him to his mother's door; his clothes were in tatters, and it soon became plain that he was starving.

From the hints which his sister let drop in her brief but suggestive account of his return, we can have no difficulty in drawing a complete and consistent picture of the occurrences that led to his putting into writing what passes as a narrative of his adventures at this time.

Although his poor mother must have been overjoyed to see him again, after being for weeks in the depths of despair respecting him, yet there can be no doubt that, when she learned that he had no money and no prospects, she expressed her opinion on the situation with a vehemence that was not only pardonable and natural, but praiseworthy as well, unless she had meant to play the part of the mother of the prodigal son. But Oliver had become so accustomed to the indulgences granted to the prodigal, it seemed that he expected a premium to be attached to prodigality; and he felt greatly hurt by her remarks, so much so, in fact, that we are pretty sure he left the cottage and hastened to the house of his brother, where he was received as cordially as



BALLYMAHON.

From a photograph by W. Swanston.

ever, and where, no doubt, he met his sister and his brother-in-law, Daniel Hodson the younger. After due discussion, it was resolved that Oliver should be asked to write out and lay before his mother a full account of his adventures of the previous six weeks, with a view to reconcile her to his return under the deplorable conditions of which she had become superficially aware.

He agreed to do so; and his success in this way we are disposed to regard as marking an important point in his life; for it was, we are convinced, his success over this composition that made him aware for the first time of what he could do with a pen in hand. In every portion of this document there is visible the growth of a narrative under the impulse of the imagination of a writer who has just become aware of his own powers. We are persuaded that he was astonished at the evolution of his story—at the easy way in which it worked itself out, moving naturally from detail to detail, with the delightful contrasts of the humourous and the stern, with all its firm touches of character, its suggestions of the grotesque, and at least one perfect bit of pathos, the whole linked together by niceties of language, graceful and appropriate expressions, and in a style as unaffected as it was lucid. He could not have been otherwise than astonished at so charming a result of his sitting down at the suggestion of his brother and sister to write to their mother an exculpatory letter; and thus he was for the first time made aware of his endowments—his exquisite style of writing, and the colour and glow of life which he was able to impart to every scene that his imagination painted.

Mr. John Forster, whose caution constituted one of his greatest qualifications as a biographer, refers to this narrative; but as he was unable to find a copy in Goldsmith's handwriting, he thought it prudent only to print it in the Appendix to his biography; at the same time he suggests no doubt as to its authenticity. It would, we think, be impossible for any one possessing even the smallest amount of critical judgment to do so. It has the Goldsmith touch in every line, with just enough crudity about it to convey the impression of immaturity—not the immaturity of Byron's *Hours of Idleness* compared with his Fourth Canto of *Childe*

Harold's Pilgrimage; not the immaturity of Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray* compared with his *Sonnet on Westminster Bridge*, but an immaturity that can only be detected by a careful study of its phrases. That is the most astonishing thing about it, the delicate quality of its immaturity. It is a salad that contains every ingredient prescribed in the recipe, and that only needs the *soupir* of garlic to make it perfect. So far as its general style is concerned, it is as thoroughly Goldsmith as is *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

We quote it in full in order that readers may have an opportunity of forming an opinion on a point which we think must be acknowledged to be one of the greatest interest:

"My Dear Mother,

"If you will sit down and calmly listen to what I say, you shall be fully resolved in every one of those many questions you have asked me. I went to Cork and converted my horse, which you prize so much higher than Fiddleback, into cash, took my passage in a ship bound for America, and, at the same time, paid the captain for my freight and all the other expenses of my voyage. But it so happened that the wind did not answer for three weeks; and you know, mother, that I could not command the elements. My misfortune was that when the wind served I happened to be with a party in the country, and my friend the captain never inquired after me, but set sail with as much indifference as if I had been on board. The remainder of my time I employed in the city and its environs; viewing everything curious, and you know no one can starve while he has money in his pocket.

"Reduced, however, to my last two guineas, I began to think of my dear mother and friends whom I had left behind me, and so bought that generous beast, Fiddleback, and made adieu to Cork with only five shillings in my pocket. This to be sure was but a scanty allowance for man and horse towards a journey of above a hundred miles; but I did not despair; for I knew I must find friends on the road.

"I recollected particularly an old and faithful acquaintance I made at college, who had often and earnestly pressed me to spend a summer with him, and he lived but eight miles from

Cork. This circumstance of vicinity he would expatiate on to me with peculiar emphasis. 'We shall,' says he, 'enjoy the delights of both city and country, and you shall command my purse and my stable.'

"However, upon the way I met a poor woman all in tears, who told me her husband had been arrested for a debt he was not able to pay, and that his eight children must now starve, bereaved as they were of his industry, which had been their only support. I thought myself at home, being not far from my good friend's house, and therefore parted with a moiety of all my store; and pray, mother, ought I not to have given her the other half-crown, for what she got would be of little use to her?—However, I soon arrived at the mansion of my affectionate friend, guarded by the vigilance of a huge mastiff, who flew at me and would have torn me to pieces but for the assistance of a woman, whose countenance was not less grim than that of the dog; yet she with great humanity relieved me from the jaws of this Cerberus, and was prevailed on to carry up my name to her master.

"Without suffering me to wait long, my old friend, who was then recovering from a severe fit of sickness, came down in his night-cap, night-gown, and slippers, and embraced me with the most cordial welcome, showed me in, and, after giving me a history of his indisposition, assured me that he considered himself peculiarly fortunate in having under his roof the man he most loved on earth, and whose stay with him must, above all things, contribute to his perfect recovery. I now repented sorely I had not given the poor woman the other half-crown, as I thought all my bills of humanity would be punctually answered by this worthy man. I revealed to him my whole soul; I opened to him all my distresses; and freely owned that I had but one half-crown in my pocket; but that now, like a ship after weathering out the storm, I considered myself secure in a safe and hospitable harbour. He made no answer, but walked about the room, rubbing his hands as one in deep study. This I imputed to the sympathetic feelings of a tender heart, which increased my esteem for him, and, as that increased, I gave the most favourable interpretation to his silence. I con-

strued it into delicacy of sentiment, as if he dreaded to wound my pride by expressing his commiseration in words, leaving his generous conduct to speak for itself.

"It now approached six o'clock in the evening, and as I had eaten no breakfast, and as my spirits were raised, my appetite for dinner grew uncommonly keen. At length the old woman came into the room with two plates, one spoon, and a dirty cloth, which she laid upon the table. This appearance, without increasing my spirits, did not diminish my appetite. My protectress soon returned with a small bowl of sago, a small porringer of sour milk, a loaf of stale brown bread, and the heel of an old cheese all over crawling with mites. My friend apologised that his illness obliged him to live on slops, and that better fare was not in the house; observing, at the same time, that a milk diet was certainly the most healthful. At eight o'clock he again recommended a regular life, declaring that for his part he would *lie down with the lamb and rise with the lark*. My hunger was at this time so exceedingly sharp that I wished for another slice of the loaf, but was obliged to go to bed without even that refreshment.

"This lenten entertainment I had received made me resolve to depart as soon as possible; accordingly next morning, when I spoke of going, he did nor oppose my resolution; he rather commended my design, adding some very sage counsel upon the occasion. 'To be sure,' said he, 'the longer you stay away from your mother the more you will grieve her and your other friends; and possibly they are already afflicted at hearing of this foolish expedition you have made.' Notwithstanding all this, and without any hope of softening such a sordid heart, I again renewed the tale of my distress, and asking 'how he thought I could travel above a hundred miles upon one half-crown?' I begged to borrow a single guinea, which I assured him should be repaid with thanks. 'And you know, sir,' said I, 'it is no more than I have often done for you.' To which he firmly answered: 'Why look you, Mr. Goldsmith, that is neither here nor there. I have paid you all you ever lent me, and this sickness of mine has left me bare of cash. But I have thought myself of a conveyance for you; sell your horse, and I will

furnish you with a much better one to ride on.' I readily grasped at this proposal, and begged to see the nag, on which he led me to his bedchamber, and from under the bed he pulled out a stout oak stick. 'Here he is,' said he; 'take this in your hand and it will carry you to your mother's with more safety than such a horse as you ride.' I was in doubt, when I got it into my hand, whether I should not, in the first place, apply it to his pate; but a rap at the street door made the wretch fly to it, and when I returned to the parlour, he introduced me, as if nothing of the kind had happened, to the gentleman who entered, as Mr. Goldsmith, his most ingenious and worthy friend, of whom he had so often heard him speak with rapture. I could scarcely compose myself; and must have betrayed indignation in my mien to the stranger who was a counsellor-at-law in the neighbourhood, a man of engaging aspect and polite address.

"After spending an hour, he asked my friend and me to dine with him at his house. This I declined at first, as I wished to have no further communication with my hospitable friend; but at the solicitation of both I at last consented, determined as I was by two motives; one, that I was prejudiced in favour of the looks and manner of the counsellor: and the other, that I stood in need of a comfortable dinner. And there, indeed, I found everything that I could wish, abundance without profusion, and elegance without affectation. In the evening, when my old friend, who had eaten very plentifully at his neighbour's table, but talked again of lying down with the lamb, made a motion to me for retiring, our generous host requested I should take a bed with him, upon which I plainly told my old friend that he might go home and take care of the horse he had given me, but that I should never re-enter his doors. He went away with a laugh, leaving me to add this to the other little things the counsellor already knew of his plausible neighbour.

"And now, my dear mother, I found sufficient to reconcile me to all my follies; for here I spent three whole days. The counsellor had two sweet girls to his daughters, who played enchantingly on the harpsichord: and yet it was but a melancholy pleasure I felt the first time I heard them;

for that being the first time also that either of them had touched the instrument since their mother's death, I saw the tears in silence trickle down their father's cheeks. I every day endeavoured to go away, but every day was pressed and obliged to stay. On my going, the counsellor offered me his purse, with a horse and servant to convey me home; but the latter I declined, and only took a guinea to bear my necessary expenses on the road.

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"*To* Mrs. Anne Goldsmith
"*Ballymahon.*"

The question of the accuracy or the inaccuracy of this charming narrative of a dramatic series of incidents is not one that concerns us greatly; but we are certainly inclined to think that it is artistically credible in every particular. No one can have lived long in the world without becoming aware of the fact that every class of man has his own type of adventures awaiting him, and the incidents narrated with such spirit by Oliver Goldsmith in this letter are distinctly of the type that we associate with his name. That is the extent of the freedom we take in considering the question of accuracy in connection with an interesting and well told story.

How could such a letter fail to accomplish its aim? It did not fail. If his mother fell short of a complete appreciation of its charm of style, her heart did not remain closed to such an appeal as the writer made to her in so insinuating a form, and a reconciliation followed. He returned to his mother's cottage, and possibly the horse, Fiddleback, had, like his master, a few days in clover, unless the hunt kennels were within easy walking distance from Ballymahon.

Before the prodigal had got the taste of the veal cutlet off his mouth, his friends were making further efforts to help him to earn his living; and after a short family council, it was decided that the law offered them the best chance of ridding themselves of the burthen of his keep. Once again Uncle Contarine came forward with a purse in his hand. Fifty guineas were given to the unpromising nephew, and it was expected that with this sum he was to pay the expenses

incidental to his reading at the Inns of Court until he should be fully qualified to starve as a barrister.

Oliver took the money, set off to Dublin with it, and meeting in that city one of his Roscommon friends, promptly lost every penny of it over a game of cards. He wrote a penitent letter to his uncle, was quickly forgiven by this benevolent man, and furnished with the means of returning to Ballymahon. It was not to Ballymahon he returned, however, but to his brother's house at Pallas—his mother positively refused to admit him to her cottage, and no one could blame her for doing so, least of all her scapegrace son. It is plain that the patience of all his relatives, with the exception perhaps of his uncle, was completely exhausted by this time; for soon there came a disagreement with his brother. There was a sister-in-law in the house, it must be remembered, and the forty-pounds-a-year tradition still clung tenaciously to the household at Pallas, and the income was not much to maintain a stock of patience on, in addition to a strong young man, who had planted himself down in the parlour and looked for regular meals. The breaking strain of his brother's endurance had been reached at last. A sensible wife, when she also discharges the duties of cook, has usually a word or two to say to her husband when they are alone at night on the subject of the extra mouth to feed without any extra money being forthcoming for this purpose. The result was inevitable in the home of the poor curate. There was a difference of opinion on some point between the brothers, and a distinct quarrel, the effect of which was to cause Oliver to leave the house and hasten to the only door which was left open for his entering—that of his uncle, Contarine,' at Kilmore. Here he seems ever to have been welcome, and it was undoubtedly the pleasantest home in the whole connection. There was a Miss Contarine who played the harpsichord vastly well and she had possibly some music arranged for the harpsichord and flute. There were duets sounding at odd times in the vicarage parlour in those days, and doubtless a solo now and again—*Johnny Armstrong's Last Good-night*, and it may be some new words to some local melodies.

And so the days passed all too quickly for the young man

—he was scarcely twenty-four, and without the least sense of responsibility—and perhaps for the young woman as well: she was a few years older, and it may be in some measure responsive, though she was probably at this time engaged to the man whom she married early the following year—until there arrived at the Vicarage a distinguished relative and guest, the Dean of Cloyne. This dignitary seems to have been a sort of *arbiter elegantiarum* of the family, and he may have been entreated by the humbler clerics in the connection to say what was to be done with the unpromising young man. He had apparently no trouble in giving his decision on the question: there could be no doubt that he would have a future as a medical practitioner. This was what Dean Goldsmith decided. Upon what data he based his judgment we have no means of finding out. It may be that he concluded that, as Oliver had essayed the Church and the law without success, he would do well to give physic a trial. The whole business of choosing a profession for Oliver Goldsmith has a very Irish air about it. The moment that the Bishop of Elphin declines to accept the responsibility of vouching for his qualifications for holy orders it is taken for granted that the Church has been given a fair trial; as if every one in the family believed that there was no way of entering the Church except through the Elphin porch. Then because he allows a sharper to get the better of him when on his way to qualify for the law, it is at once assumed that the law is closed to him. To be sure, it must be admitted that the fact of his allowing the other man to play the part of the sharper gives an air of reasonableness to the assumption that he would never become a successful lawyer; but it could scarcely be said that either the Church or the law had been given a fair trial.

The truth is that Oliver Goldsmith was about the most unpractical person in Ireland, and he was surrounded by relations who knew no more of the world than could be gained by an intimate association with the affairs of Ballymahon or the like. They were as kindly a folk as ever lived, and patient beyond all reason; but in worldly wisdom they were on the level of a child. Not one of them had the least qualification for "getting on" and most of them were endowed

with those qualities—nearly all estimable—which tend in the other direction. A complete absence of ambition seems to have marked the whole Goldsmith connection, Oliver Goldsmith included. They seemed to ask for nothing except to be allowed to live, and the attempt to gain even so small a concession from the world occupied all their time. Oliver Goldsmith himself was quite devoid of ambition. He had no ambition to become a great writer. He only became a great writer to keep himself from starvation.

The Dean of the family was on a level with his relations, so far as his capacity to pronounce an opinion on a question of the capacity of another was concerned. There never was a man less likely to succeed as a physician than Oliver Goldsmith. Even the few days' acquaintance which the Dean had with him should have made this fact plain. Uncle Contarine had, however, confidence in the man's judgment —the confidence which a humble country rector used in the old days to have in his Bishop or in the nearest dignitary of the Church—and he at once made his nephew an offer to defray the expense of his medical education. As might have been expected from his previous exhibitions of docility, the nephew at once accepted the offer. In some parts of Ireland still, preparing for a profession has become a profession in itself. Goldsmith when in Dublin had doubtless become acquainted with the many fascinations of this easy-going scheme of life. He had already spent two years longer than was necessary to qualify for his degree at Trinity College, and a further three years qualifying for the profession which makes the smallest demands upon a candidate; and now he was, of course, quite as ready to spend a few more years qualifying for medicine as he had been to qualify for law. Such complacency as he showed in entering upon a new course of study—to put his own interpretation upon the phrase—was part of his nature. He himself had no idea what profession he was fitted for; but he knew that he was fully qualified by an open mind to spend some interesting years in a strange place at the expense of some one else. He had heard of Edinburgh, and he knew that it was as distant as London from Ballymahon, though comparative distances are not officially calculated from that centre; and so he

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probably felt that he would have as complete a sense of travel by going to the one to study medicine as by going to the other to study law.

He was grateful to his uncle Contarine, and his other relations were gladly reconciled to him and to his prospect of leaving Ireland for an indefinite period.

It was in October 1752 that he started for Edinburgh. The duration of the journey in those days was usually only a little longer than is that of a voyage to New York in these days. And like many persons who leave Ireland on the latter journey, he never saw his native land again.

CHAPTER VII

IN EDINBURGH

1752–1754

ONLY one letter written by Oliver Goldsmith when he was still in Ireland was preserved, and even of this the original, as we have already mentioned, was not to be found when Prior was diligently collecting materials for his biography. Of the hundreds of letters which he states in one place he wrote to his friends in Ireland without receiving a reply, a few were kept, and three of the most interesting of these deal with his life in Edinburgh, and show pretty clearly that the writer's mind was bent upon study, but ethnological rather than anatomical. It is more than likely that he wrote from Edinburgh to his brother Henry, his sister Catherine, his mother, and many of his old associates, but all the letters were lost or destroyed as worthless with the exception of one to Bob Bryanton and two to his uncle and benefactor. The recipients did not see any special reason why they should be kept. Possibly an uneasy feeling prevailed in the family circle that, Oliver being now at a distance, it might be as well to keep him there, and, by destroying his letters unanswered, get rid of such reminders of the disturbing influence he had once had on their placid lives. They were doubtless warm-hearted, affectionate people, and they had not lost their natural affection for him; but they felt that it would on the whole be better for him, as well as for themselves, if they were to show him a little coldness. He was not encouraged to write to them, and they destroyed his letters unanswered, so that they could no longer be reproached by seeing them every time they went to their desks.

We all know the way worthy and even warm-hearted people can bring themselves to regard the menace of an

erratic relation, and how they are in constant fear that if he receives the least encouragement, he will return some day to settle down upon them. Considering the experience that they had had of Oliver during some years, no great blame attaches to any members of his family for their seeming coldness to him when he was at a distance; only we feel that they might have kept his letters.

From various sources we learn a good deal about his life in Edinburgh, and something even about his medical studies. It becomes perfectly plain that the trend of his mind was to get to know people and to understand them. He was that best of all observers, the man who assimilates unconsciously all the information possible to obtain about a people, and who has a genius for noting the important minutiæ in the character either of a person or a family or a people. He shows such power in reproducing these illuminating but delicate traits that one is amazed to hear of his being imposed upon by very ordinary impostors. He could paint the portrait of a rascal like Mr. Jenkinson, so that any one meeting such a man would be on guard against him; but he himself was constantly being made the victim of Mr. Jenkinson and his confederates. He could draw a finished portrait of Mr. Lofty, and so warn every one who reads *The Good-Natur'd Man* of the danger of being carried away by a plausible boaster; and yet we hear of his being constantly taken in by such a man.

The question that suggests itself from an acquaintance with these facts is, Was he really taken in by such impostors? Might it not be that he was content to pay a price for his study of these characters?

We must confess that the more attention we give to the peculiarities of Goldsmith's nature, and especially to the form of his humour, the more likely does it seem to us that he now and again submitted to the exactions of men whom he could see through, for the sake of the artistic pleasure he derived from studying them.

This point is suggested, not by reason of any Edinburgh experience of his, but by the power of observation of character which he shows in his letters written in that city. Up to the time of his writing these letters no evidence is forthcoming

of his ability in any direction. The picture which one forms of him in Ireland is that of a pleasant but an ordinary simple-minded country lad who has failed at everything he has put his hand to, and from whom his relations are justified in fearing there is little to hope. His letter to his mother gives us a hint of his humour and his capabilities of being interesting on paper; but when we read all that he wrote to Bob Bryanton and, in a different way, to his uncle, we cannot but feel that we are reading the productions of a man possessing powers of observations of the highest order. We feel that he has made strides in his education since he left College, and that the years of fruitful idleness which he passed among the villages of Roscommon—with an occasional disastrous excursion to Cork and Dublin—are nothing to reproach him with. We begin to have an impression that, whatever he may have been when he first went to the University, he is now no fool. To be sure, so far as he is personally concerned it cannot be said that he shows any more likelihood of "getting on in the world" than he ever did; the fact being that he was never able to turn his powers of observation and his capacity to grasp subtleties of character to his own advantage apart from his literary work. He suggests, in his career and its accidents, a man who is so busy observing everything to his right hand and to his left that he walks into the ditch that is directly in front of him. Goldsmith could look in every direction but straight ahead; when he tried to do so he only showed that he had an incurable astigmatism which distorted the objects before him, but when he became colloquial and unscientific and glanced "out of the sides of his eyes" at anything, he saw it clearly and accurately in every detail.

The incident that is recorded of his first hour in Edinburgh illustrates what we have ventured to suggest as his greatest failing in his walk through life. It is said that the moment his trunk had been deposited at his lodgings, he hastened out to the streets and became so absorbed in observing everything, that it was only when he thought of returning he found that he had neglected to take a note of the street where the lodging-house was situated. There he was on all-fours in the ditch; but he had learned more of Edinburgh and its people in that evening than an ordinary man could have learned, for the

ordinary man would have spent the afternoon unpacking and arranging everything for his own comfort in the room he had taken, and the ordinary man would have shown his good sense; but he would have left no material for an anecdote that people, a hundred and fifty years later, would read and value as indicative of the character of a man about whom every bit of information is regarded as precious.

Happily Oliver Goldsmith came upon the caddy who had acted as his porter earlier in the day—he had taken his observation of the caddy and recognised him at once—and so he got once more in touch with his trunk.

He settled down at once to make the most of his time among a strange people. He became a student of the streets, of the peculiarities of the people, and, incidentally, of the School of Medicine. He made friends in many quarters, avoiding, as usual, those who might possibly have been useful in forwarding his interests in the profession for which he was supposed to be qualifying. He seems to have joined with two other medical students in his boarding arrangements, for three is the number mentioned by him as necessary for the consumption of a whole loin of mutton in a week, beginning with "brandered chops," going on to a grill, then to cutlets with onion sauce, until the "fleshy parts" were quite consumed, bringing them on to the seventh day, when the bones were used as the basis of a tureen of Scotch broth "and the landlady rested from her labours." His sister, in her narrative, published in the rambling memoir over which Bishop Percy and his friends had a very pretty quarrel, refers to this cuisine with something like the sniff of a good housekeeper, suggesting that its meagreness caused him to find it expedient to remove to another and more generous house. She did not know that to the great majority of Scotch students the fare which she seemed to think niggardly would have appeared sumptuous. She had clearly heard nothing of the sack of meal in one corner and the sack of potatoes in the other, to provide alternate meals for Edinburgh students for "the Ministry."

But it would seem that the new boarding-house had other attractions for the Irish student besides a more varied *menu*. The boarders were more numerous, and, under the influence

of a generous diet, were much more sociable here than elsewhere, and they were not slow to recognise the value of the newcomer as a contributor to their gaiety. The gaiety of Scotch students is something quite different from that of the Irish, but Oliver Goldsmith's associates were sufficiently liberal-minded to be able to admit the possibility of their humour being improved by the admission of a Hibernian strain, and the chances are that they found out that they were right in trying such an experiment. At any rate, we hear that Goldsmith was shortly afterwards admitted a member of the Medical Society without the usual qualification of reading a paper on a medical subject. His name appears among the members in the books of the Society for January 13, 1753. In none of his letters, however, does he hint at the "dissipations" which his sister laments that he was led into. But in the ears of a prudent sister one clink of a glass coming from downstairs on awaking from her first sleep suggests an orgy, if there are but two or three young men in the house. Her brother Oliver may have had a "dissipation" in Edinburgh now and again, but it may be taken for granted that it was a *fête maigre*—one conducted on the principles of the loin-of-mutton landlady: a little of it went a long way. It was a chastened debauch—a spree on what sailors used to deride under the name of "seven-water grog." It is said that upon one occasion he and a number of friends were together when he suddenly made the dare-devil proposal that they should draw lots which of them should treat the rest to the theatre where a new play was to be performed. The Scotsmen shook their heads. They were ready to carry the evening's orgy a certain distance, but they knew where to stop. His good sister need not have had an uneasy moment. With such canny young bloods as his companions, the scenes of dissipation could only be painted in a very much diluted tint of red.

His letters to his cousin Bryanton suggests another form of Scotch gaiety to which he was introduced. He says:

"The men here have generally high cheek-bones, and are lean and swarthy, fond of action, dancing in particular. Though now I mention dancing, let me say something of their balls

which are very frequent here. When a stranger enters the dancing-hall, he sees one end of the room taken up by the ladies, who sit dismally in a groupe by themselves. On the other end stand their pensive partners that are to be: but no more intercourse between the sexes than there is between two countries at war:—the ladies, indeed, may ogle, and the gentlemen sigh, but an embargo is laid on any closer commerce. At length, to interrupt hostilities, the lady directress or intendant, or what you will, pitches on a gentleman and lady to walk a minuet; which they perform with a formality that approaches to despondence. After five or six couple have thus walked the gauntlet, all stand up to country dances; each gentleman furnished with a partner from the aforesaid lady directress; so they dance much and say nothing, and thus concludes our assembly. I told a Scotch gentleman that such profound silence resembled the ancient procession of the Roman matrons in honour of Ceres, and the Scotch gentleman told me (and 'faith, I believe he was right) that I was a very great pedant for my pains.

"Now I am come to the ladies; and to show that I love Scotland, and everything that belongs to so charming a country, I insist on it, and will give him leave to break my head that denies it, that the Scotch ladies are ten thousand times handsomer and finer than the Irish:—to be sure now I see your sisters Betty and Peggy vastly surprised at my partiality, but tell them flatly I don't value them, or their fine skins, or eyes, or good sense, or —, a potato; for I say it and will maintain it, and as a convincing proof (I'm in a very great passion) of what I assert, the Scotch ladies say it themselves. But to be less serious; where will you find a language so pretty become a pretty mouth as the broad Scotch? And the women here speak it in its highest purity; for instance, teach one of their young ladies to pronounce 'Whoar wull I gong?' with a becoming wideness of mouth, and I'll lay my life they will wound every hearer.

"We have no such character here as a coquet; but, alas! how many envious prudes! Some days ago I walked into my Lord Kilcoubry's (don't be surprised, my lord is but a glover), when the Duchess of Hamilton (that fair who sacrificed her beauty to ambition, and her inward peace

to a title and gilt equipage) passed by in her chariot; her battered husband, or, more properly, the guardian of her charms, sat by her side. Straight envy began, in the shape of no less than three ladies who sat with me, to find faults in her faultless form. 'For my part,' says the first, 'I think what I always thought, that the Duchess has too much red in her complexion.' 'Madam, I'm of your opinion,' says the second; 'I think her face has a palish cast too much on the delicate order.' 'And let me tell you,' adds the third lady, whose mouth was puckered up to the size of an issue, 'that the Duchess has fine lips, but she wants a mouth.' At this every lady drew up her mouth as if going to pronounce the letter P."

From this extract from a lively and generally admirable letter it may be gathered that Goldsmith was not likely to be guilty of any excesses of gaiety at one of these Scottish dances. They differed considerably from those mentioned in Murger's *Vie de Bohème*. Edinburgh was "a far cry" from the Bohemian capital.

It is interesting to note in this letter his reference to the Duchess of Hamilton. She was, of course, his country-woman, *née* Gunning, the younger of the two beautiful sisters who had during the previous year taken London by storm, and set half the mothers in Ireland borrowing money in order to exploit their beautiful daughters at St. James's. The success of the Gunnings must have formed the chief topic of conversation in every part of Ireland from the day they went to Dublin and were taken under the wing of the Lord-Lieutenant until they made their brilliant, but not too brilliant, matches; and Castle Coote, their Roscommon home, was within easy distance of Ballymahon. The Duchess of Hamilton, who threw herself away upon a *roué*—he was said to be a wreck at twenty-five—had made a royal progress to the ducal palace at Edinburgh a short time before Goldsmith recorded having seen her, and when Bob Bryanton passed round the news in his visits to Lissoy and Emlagh his relations must have been as interested as if he had told them that Oliver had seen the king.

But what were they to say when they heard from Uncle

Contarine that Oliver had spent every second day for more than a fortnight at the Duke of Hamilton's, but had felt bound to refuse to continue his visits because of his noticing that "they like me more as a jester than as a companion"? Well, we know that on hearing this astounding piece of news, his friends would have roared with laughter, for they would have been well aware of the fact that Oliver was himself jesting. He was only making a variant upon a jest which was always quite common in Ireland, and which lasted well into the nineteenth century. When a young fellow returned to his native village after spending a day or two in Dublin, he was asked by every tradesman if he had been visiting the Lord-Lieutenant and, if so, had his Excellency sent by him any kind message.

Some of Goldsmith's biographers have assumed, on the basis of this paragraph in a letter to his uncle, that he had endeavoured to augment his uncle's allowance by a tutorship at the Duke of Hamilton's. We do not know whom he would have been tutor to in that household; but even if there had been any one who stood in need of a tutor, would Oliver Goldsmith have been selected for the office? We think not. The beautiful Duchess had had enough of Ireland and the Irish to last her for the rest of her life. Walpole referred in more than one of his letters to the Irish brogue of the Gunnings; but it is quite unlikely that either of them had any but the faintest of brogues. Their father and mother would have taken very good care of this, for the tradition of the "English accent" was very dear to the better class of the English settlers in Ireland. The Duchess of Hamilton had long learned to associate the brogue with the subject race. Her heart would not have warmed to it if she had heard it spoken at the base of the Pentland Hills, as we are given to understand the heart of a true Irishwoman would have done under like conditions. She never wished to hear the brogue again, and as Goldsmith certainly had it, he was the last man in Edinburgh whom she would have admitted to her palace, even though she had great need of a tutor, and tutors were scarce in Edinburgh. When she wanted one for her son she got one in the person of Dr. John Moore, the father of the hero of Corunna.

But it is really unnecessary to go into any question of probabilities in this connection. Every one aware of the many forms assumed by Irish humour will recognise the character of the jest in the letter, and all the more easily, too, on account of the expression of the mock indignation of the writer when the truth dawned upon him that "they" regarded him as a humourist rather than as a companion; "so I disdained so servile an employment; 'twas unworthy my calling as a physician."

In the same letter he makes out a very good case for his going to Paris and Leyden in order to complete his studies; and we have no difficulty in seeing that the travel thirst was upon him. He had exhausted Edinburgh and the Scots, and wanted a new people to study—that was the study that he wanted, though it may have been in good faith that he wrote to his uncle that what was nearest his heart was to have the benefit of the medical instruction imparted to his classes at Paris of "the great Mr. Farhein, Petit, and Du Hammel de Monceau."

"My dear Uncle,

"After having spent two winters in Edinburgh, I now prepare to go to France the 10th of next February. I have seen all that this country can exhibit in the medical way, and therefore intend to visit Paris, where the great Mr. Farhein, Petit, and Du Hammel de Monceau instruct their pupils in all the branches of medicine. They speak French, and consequently I shall have much the advantage of most of my countrymen, as I am perfectly acquainted with that language, and few who leave Ireland are so.

"Since I am upon so pleasing a topic as self-applause, give me leave to say that the circle of science which I have run through, before I undertook the study of physic, is not only useful but absolutely necessary to the making a skilful physician. Such sciences enlarge our understanding, and sharpen our sagacity; and what is a practitioner without both but an empiric, for never yet was a disorder found entirely the same in two patients. A quack, unable to distinguish the particularities in each disease, prescribes at a venture: if he finds such a disorder may be called by the general name

of fever for instance, he has a set of remedies which he applies to cure it, nor does he desist till his medicines are run out, or his patient has lost his life. But the skilful physician distinguishes the symptoms, manures the sterility of nature, or prunes her luxuriance; nor does he depend so much on the efficacy of medicines as on their proper application. I shall spend this spring and summer in Paris, and the beginning of next winter go to Leyden. The great Albinus is still alive there, and 'twill be proper to go, though only to have it said that we have studied in so famous an university.

"As I shall not have another opportunity of receiving money from your bounty till my return to Ireland, so I have drawn for the last sum that I hope I shall ever trouble you for; 'tis £20. And now, dear Sir, let me here acknowledge the humility of the station in which you found me; let me tell how I was despised by most, and hateful to myself. Poverty, hopeless povery, was my lot, and Melancholy was beginning to make me her own. When you—but I stop here, to inquire how your health goes on. How goes my dear cousin Jenny, and has she recovered her late complaint? How does my poor Jack Goldsmith? I fear his disorder is of such a nature as he won't easily recover. I wish, my dear Sir, you would make me happy by another letter before I go abroad, for there I shall hardly hear from you. I shall carry just £33 to France, with good store of clothes, shirts, &c. &c., and that with economy will serve."

In a previous letter to his uncle he also shows a great interest in his preparation for his profession; but we are inclined to think, with his letter to Bob Bryanton before us, and his sister's references to his "wildness," that he exaggerates the isolation of his position in Edinburgh.

He writes gloomily of having left behind him in Ireland everything worth possessing, friends he loved and "a society that pleased while it instructed." (This allusion is somewhat obscure, it seems to us. Where in the region round about Ballymahon was that fascinating society to be found? If the reference was to the Club at Conway's ale-house, we are not quite sure that it would be recognised even by his uncle.) "Here," he continues, "as recluse as the Turkish Spy at

Paris, I am almost unknown to everybody, except some few who attend the professors of physic as I do."

His sister would certainly have been gratified had she seen this letter. She would have known that he had settled down to play the part of a recluse, eager only to make good progress in his study of medicine. At the same time we do not think that she would have gone so far as to be anxious lest his health should suffer through his carrying his love of seclusion to any unreasonable distance. No, she had had some experience of how he had endeavoured to realise his yearning for isolation at Ballymahon, when he took the chair in George Conway's bar-parlour.

But then comes a part of the same letter which startles one by the force of his criticism of the Edinburgh professors. Without claiming to be acquainted with the individual reputation of the men whom he names, we cannot but feel that such a criticism of each could only have been written by a man possessing the highest powers of observation.

"Apropos, I shall give you the professors' names, and, as far as occurs to me, their characters; and first, as most deserving, Mr. Munro, professor of Anatomy. This man has brought the science he teaches to as much perfection as it is capable of; and not content with barely teaching anatomy, he launches out into all branches of physic, when all his remarks are new and useful. 'Tis he, I may venture to say, that draws hither such a number of students from most parts of the world, even from Russia. He is not only a skilful physician, but an able orator, and delivers things in their nature obscure in so easy a manner that the most unlearned may understand him. Plume, professor of Chemistry, understands his business well, but delivers himself so ill, that he is but little regarded. Alston, professor of Materia Medica, speaks much, but little to the purpose. The professors of Theory and Practice (of physic) say nothing but what we may find in books laid before us; and speak that in so drowsy and heavy a manner that their hearers are not many degrees in a better state than their patients.

"You see then, dear sir, that Munro is the only great man among them; so that I intend to hear him another winter,

and go then to hear Albinus, the great professor at Leyden. I read (with satisfaction) a science the most pleasing in nature, so that my labours are but a relaxation, and, I may truly say, the only thing here that gives me pleasure. How I enjoy the pleasing hope of returning with skill, and to find my friends stand in no need of my assistance! How many happy years do I wish you! And nothing but want of health can take from you happiness, since you so well pursue the paths that conduct to virtue."

The concluding touch of priggishness—elaborated for the Kilmore parsonage—is relieved by the happy expression of his hope that his friends would not require him to display his skill at their expense. The letter seems to us to be in every respect an able one. But that to Bob Bryanton makes pleasanter reading, because it is not so able but a good deal more natural.

A few months after writing his last letter, giving his uncle notice that he would draw upon him for a moderate amount, he was ready to leave Edinburgh for the Continent.

CHAPTER VIII

IN LEYDEN

1754–1755

When one hears of Goldsmith's making any important move, one naturally awaits an account of an accompanying adventure. His friends had had enough experience of the disasters that attended almost every promising enterprise in which he engaged to prevent them from being surprised to hear that he had reached Leyden only after as many vicissitudes as would form the groundwork for quite an exciting story. Now, given the materials for a good story and given the story-teller in the same connection, it may be assumed that the story will be forthcoming. In fact we might go further, and say that, given a good story-teller, the materials for a good story will be forthcoming, and the story itself will come in due course.

The narrative of his adventures when he set out for the Colonies in America was undoubtedly entertaining, looked at from every point of view, even the point of view of credibility. But it was tame in comparison with the story which he was able to tell of his adventures when endeavouring to transfer his devotion to medical study from Edinburgh to Leyden. It indicates pretty plainly, we think, not only that there is something in our theory that every man has his own type of adventure, but that in the case of some men their adventures increase as their capacity for narration matures. Goldsmith's Cork *contretemps* was a simple one, which, with a little manœuvring, might happen to any one. The ship in which he was about to sail was windbound, and he had remained ashore expecting the captain to send through the country and collect his passengers when the wind should change. His error arose from this misplaced confidence in

the master mariner and his ignorance of the contingencies of navigation, which compel a seaman, however courteously inclined he may be, to hoist his sails when he gets the chance of a fair wind and get clear of a tricky harbour. That was a very simple tale of his, and it would have found ready credence if told to a corps so imperfectly acquainted with matters of practical seamanship as the marines.

But he showed that he could far surpass such an adventure as this if he only set his mind to it. He was at the point of leaving Scotland—doubtless via Leith—when he was arrested by bailiffs, the fact being that he had some time before become security for a fellow-student who had either absconded or defaulted, leaving him liable for the amount of the bond. Happily, two of his good friends, Dr. Sleigh and Lauchlan Macleane, came to his assistance, and he embarked in the *St. Andrews*—Captain John Wall, master—bound for Bordeaux. (From learning the destination of the vessel, one is led to wonder whether he meant to go to Paris, in accordance with his first intention, or to Leyden, which he thought of at a later period. Perhaps the truth is, that he did not care which place he went to, so long as it was a strange place.) But when the vessel had been at sea for two days battling with a gale, the captain found it necessary to put into Newcastle-on-Tyne for shelter. Well, here was a place strange to Goldsmith and thus abounding in possibilities of interest. It more than fulfilled his anticipations. This is his story:

"We all went ashore to refresh us, after the fatigue of our voyage," he wrote to his uncle. "Seven men and I were one day on shore, and on the following evening, as we were all very merry, the room door bursts open; enter a sergeant and twelve grenadiers with their bayonets screwed, and puts us all under the King's arrest. It seems my company were Scotchmen in the French service, and had been in Scotland to enlist soldiers for the French army. I endeavoured all I could to prove my innocence; however, I remained in prison with the rest a fortnight, and with difficulty got off even then. Dear sir, keep this all a secret, or at least say it was for debt," he adds, "for if it were once known at the university,

I should hardly get a degree." (What University had he in his mind? Did he wish his uncle to understand that he meant to return to Edinburgh after deserting Munro for Albinus?) "But hear how Providence interposed in my favour," he continues. "The ship was gone on to Bourdeaux before I got from prison, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and every one of the crew were drowned. It happened the last great storm. There was a ship at that time ready for Holland: I embarked, and in nine days, thank my God, I arrived safe at Rotterdam; whence I travelled by land to Leyden, and whence I now write."

Then he goes on from this simple story—which, by the way, bears an extraordinary resemblance both in style and matter to the narrative of one Robinson Crusoe, mariner of York—to give his uncle a most admirable description of Holland and the Dutch, though he modestly disclaims any qualification to do so. An acquaintance with the attempt that he made, however, causes one to feel that he was over-modest. Every line that he wrote bearing upon the Dutch carries conviction with it. After reading this part of the letter we feel that he saw everything he wrote about, and that not much which he had a chance of seeing escaped his observation. Of course the question of his range of vision must be taken into consideration in expressing an opinion as to the real value of these descriptions of his. A great people—and the Dutch were for centuries a very great people indeed—are not to be understood even by a modest young man who lives in lodgings in Leyden for a month or two; and it would be absurd to say that Goldsmith ever suggested his appreciation of those traits of character of the Dutch which made them a great people—their well-balanced mind, their steadfastness of purpose, their extraordinary patience, and the patriotism which with them was never the passion that patriotism becomes (by fits and starts) with most nations, but which never ceased to be part of the life of the Dutch. These were traits of the people quite beyond the horizon of Goldsmith's vision. But no one who reads his lively description in this letter will agree with him in thinking that he was not well qualified to go even much further than he went in his account of the manners of the

country where he found himself for the first time. There is a class of critic who looks with suspicion on everything that is written in a lively vein, and only regards an opinion of value when it is delivered in the dullest prose. By such a person everything that is light is held in light esteem. But frequently some of Goldsmith's liveliest remarks are the result of attentive and accurate observation. Often, too, his imagination is the means of illuminating a page, and a simple statement becomes picturesque and thus doubly impressive.

In this letter, written to his uncle after he had been in Leyden for a short time, he refers to the way in which errors are handed down from generation to generation by writers who do not take the trouble to collect facts for themselves but are content to repeat what others have previously written, without recording any changes that may have taken place in the meantime. "Any young man who takes it into his head to publish his travels, visits the countries he intends to describe; passes through them with as much inattention as his valet de chambre, and consequently, not having a fund himself to fill a volume, he applies to those who wrote before him, and gives us the manners of a country, not as he must have seen them, but such as they might have been fifty years before. The modern Dutchman," he continues, "in everything imitates a Frenchman, but in his easy, disengaged air, which is the result of keeping polite company. The Dutchman is vastly ceremonious, and is perhaps exactly what a Frenchman might have been in the reign of Louis XIV."

Here, by this little imaginative touch, his careless and colloquial style shows us the Dutchman exactly as he was seen by the writer. In the same interesting strain he refers to the women of the country, and has a theory to account for their pallor as well as for the ruddy complexion of the men, the latter being due, he thinks, to the continuous smoking by every man, which "drains his superfluous moisture." Later he describes the canal boats. "In these," he says, "you are sure to meet people of all nations. Here the Dutch slumber, the French chatter, and the English play at cards. Any man who likes company may have them to his taste. For my part, I generally detached myself from all society, and was wholly taken up in observing the face of the country."

He winds up a delightful letter by a reference to the schools of medicine which he was attending—at the intervals between his excursions on the canals and through the villages on their banks. He is not quite so enthusiastic on the subject of medicine as he led his uncle to fancy he was when writing from Edinburgh, and he complains of the laziness of all the professors. Gaubius, however, he excepted. It is certain that he wrote several letters to his friends in Ireland from Leyden, and if these had only been preserved we should know a good deal more than we do about Dutch home life, as seen through the eyes of an observant young student during the middle of the eighteenth century, and we should have known a good deal more than we do of the observant young student himself. Unhappily, the letters were all written to Irish households. They were most likely used to wind round the ends of candles to make them fit tightly into the sockets of the candlesticks, if not to act as substitutes for the missing glass in the window-frames.

We should be inclined to wish that Goldsmith had been as careful as Pope to make copies of his letters before posting them, only that we know that such letters would have been very different from the delightful, careless, colloquial, and sometimes ungrammatical, letters from which we have quoted. We cannot see Goldsmith sitting down to copy a couple of pages before sending them off. We cannot even see him sitting down to correct one that he had already written. Pope, perhaps Gray as well, corresponded not with his friends, but with posterity; and posterity reviews his efforts with critical coldness. There is no vitality in them—no warmth of life and reality to stir criticism into friendliness. Posterity has a schoolboy's fancy for reading letters that are addressed to some one else. Goldsmith thought of nothing beyond giving a few minutes' entertainment to the simple folk living under the thatched roofs of Kilmore, Lissoy, and Ballymahon; and, unfortunately, the simple folk accepted his letters at his own valuation.

It is not necessary, however, that we should have any other examples of his correspondence before us in order to make us aware of the fact that he was becoming more interested in the means of acquiring general knowledge than special. As

soon as he had mastered the elements of medical science, as it was understood in his day, when the barber was fully qualified to perform the operation of "blooding"—England was bathed in blood at the hands of barbers at certain seasons of the year—he began, without knowing it, to qualify for another profession—the one by which he eventually gained a living, with intervals of starvation. Gradually he began to neglect the professors, and to give his attention to more congenial haunts than the class-rooms. He began to gamble on a small scale, but any scale of gambling is too large for a man who is dependent on the bounty of his friends for the very shirt on his back—he was very definite on the subject of his shirts in one of his letters to his uncle. There is some reason to believe that he made an attempt to gain some money by legitimate means to spend illegitimately; but it is difficult to say definitely that he ever did try to get pupils in English in Leyden. The adventures of the "philosophic vagabond" in *The Vicar of Wakefield* undoubtedly embodied many of his own experiences, and it will be remembered that one of the enterprises of young Primrose was to amass a fortune by teaching English to the Dutch, who were eager, he was given to understand, to learn that language; and he might have succeeded, too, had it not been necessary for him to know Dutch to start with. But no one could remain in Holland, mingling daily with the people as Goldsmith did, without acquiring a certain knowledge of the language—quite sufficient to allow of his making a start at teaching. Every one knows that in England, at any rate, a teacher of a foreign language was regarded, until quite recently, as competent in proportion to his ignorance of English. In Holland, however, even if Goldsmith had known nothing of the Dutch language, he would not have made himself ridiculous had he undertaken to teach English to those pupils who could speak French, and in the eighteenth century in Holland the proportion of the better classes who had a colloquial knowledge of French was much greater even than it is at present, when a stranger who knows that language need never find himself in a difficulty.

The truth is, that in the case of a writer who makes a practice of embodying some of his own experiences in those

which he causes one of his characters to undergo, a biographer is always puzzled in discriminating between the real and the imaginary adventures. In scores of cases that could be brought forward it has been too hastily assumed that, because the writer undoubtedly had some of the experiences which he assigns to one of his characters, he must therefore have gone through them all. In the case of Goldsmith in particular one must be in constant difficulties. A most meagre account —thanks to the culpable carelessness of Johnson and Percy, who were entrusted with the materials for a biography and took no trouble to preserve them—remains to us of many of the most interesting years of his life; but we do not suppose that there ever was an author who so thoroughly incorporated his personal experiences in his writings as Goldsmith did. But then he was an accomplished artist, and no one understood better than himself how to round off a story, so to speak. And this is wherein the difficulties of his biographer lie: one never knows when the "philosophic vagabond" ceases to be Goldsmith and becomes young Primrose; one never knows when the "Man in Black" becomes the man in the peach-bloom masterpiece of "Filby, of the Harrow in Water Lane." Goldsmith may have had incipient adventures which, in order to be made thoroughly interesting when narrated in print, had to be given certain turns at places—the high lights put in, and the *dénouement* altered to be in agreement with the tastes of a reader. Every writer who has tried to make use of some of his own experiences in a work of fiction knows, if he has any artistic sense whatsoever, how quickly he travels away from the direct line of his experience until the finished work contains only the merest anatomical outline of the actual adventure. The best writers, it appears to us, have only used their own experiences to build up the skeleton of the character or of the story; their imagination so surrounds this bare-ribbed thing with flesh and blood that it can only be seen by the aid of the X-rays. This apparatus is, however, not always available for the biographer, and in its absence he is often too ready to feel for a peculiarity in the protruding elbow-bone, and, recognising it, to announce his identification of the figure to which it belongs.

In the case of Goldsmith one is strongly tempted to

proceed without the X-rays apparatus, and to take it for granted that the "Three Pigeons" Inn was Conway's alehouse, that Dr. Primrose was in every particular the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, that "sweet Auburn" was Lissoy (without the nightingale), and that the author himself played the dual *rôle* of the "Man in Black" and the "philosophic vagabond." It is safer not to travel far in such speculations; but then the question of where to stop comes in, so that, after all, a biographer can do no more than fall back on his own judgment in this perplexing and baffling matter.

It would be impossible to say that a biographer ever acted with more praiseworthy caution in the discharge of an arduous duty than does Mr. John Forster in his *Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith*. In his facts he is never at fault, in questions of judgment some persons may be disposed to think that he is lacking in imagination; but even if their impressions were well founded it must be allowed that his deficiency is an amiable one, and one that makes for accuracy. It is, however, satisfactory to get out of the misty region of conjecture and on to the solid ground of fact in considering this period of Goldsmith's career. If it is uncertain whether he ever made an attempt to earn some money by giving tuitions at Leyden, the account of his losing money by gambling may be depended on. It came from one of his fellow students named Ellis, a gentleman who afterwards filled the post of Clerk to the Irish House of Commons. Dr. Ellis recorded the fact that Goldsmith had met him one morning, having won a considerable sum the previous night at cards. Goldsmith agreed with him that it would be wise to earmark this money to defray the expenses of the remainder of his sojourn at Leyden, and forthwith hastened to the nearest gambling-house, where he promptly lost every stiver. Ellis adds that he had frequently lent Goldsmith small sums, which he invariably repaid. This was the Irish fashion. It came as naturally to Goldsmith to borrow money when he needed it as it did for him to lend money when he had any in hand. A short time after his inevitable foolishness at the gaming-table he called upon Ellis and got another loan; but before he had gone far he found himself in front of a florist's shop, and

seeing in the window some bulbs of a flower of which he knew his uncle was very fond, he bought the lot, paying for them out of the proceeds of his borrowing, and sent them off to the Kilmore Rectory.

The very next day, according to Dr. Ellis, he left Leyden and set out on his travels.

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CHAPTER IX

VAGABONDAGE

To say that the counterpart of Oliver Goldsmith in this remarkable tour of his through Europe without money, without luggage, without friends, and without anxiety, never existed would not be correct. The year before he started from Leyden there had died a certain Baron de Holberg, a Dane, who by his own exertions had achieved both distinction and wealth; and in the accounts of his life which had just been published, it was stated that when he had been a penniless youth he had gone through several European States, begging for instruction, and endeavouring to gain a night's lodging here and there, by singing to the peasant families whose hospitality he sought. Goldsmith himself tells us in his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning* enough of this remarkable man to allow of our perceiving without much difficulty that the adventurous move on the part of Baron de Holberg had nerved him to follow in his footsteps, and he did so almost literally from the moment he left Leyden.

The only difference between Goldsmith and the earlier vagabond was that the one was something of a scholar—at any rate, he had a University degree, and he had made considerable progress in the Irish profession of "going to be a doctor"—while the other was just emerging from illiteracy. But such scholarship as Goldsmith possessed was an asset not worth considering in connection with this undertaking of his. A pair of stout shoes and a rainproof cloak would be of more service to a man starting on foot to see the world than the most intimate acquaintance with the Odes of Horace or an unusual gift of reproducing in English the hendecasyllabics of Catullus would be. Fortunately Goldsmith's scholarship sat

lightly upon him. It did not cause him to expect any consideration beyond what would be allowed to an ordinary traveller on the road. He put his scholarship in his pocket and took out his flute. His flute was his best friend—his only friend. It made its appeal to the world on his behalf, and the world welcomed it. The flute-notes of the traveller procured for him many a night's lodging among the peasants of Europe; and the flute-notes of *The Traveller* procured for him a permanent dwelling-place in the hearts of all the world!

A picturesque figure is that imaginary one of Goldsmith trudging from land to land, piping for the peasants, dancing for them, learning their ways and sharing their coarse bread and sour wine—undeniably a picturesque figure to look back at through the long vista of a century and a half. But any one who wishes to paint a true picture of the man as he appeared a month after his departure from Leyden must paint him as a forlorn beggar in tattered garments, unkempt, unwashed, and ungainly. He must not be painted as one of the merry pipers beneath the trellised vines of the Sorrento roadway, who appear in brilliant colours on the familiar curtain of a theatre; he must not be painted as one of the careless group in velvet jackets and glazed leather pumps over white stockings who give some action to a scene in an old Italian opera, but are about as like real peasants as the cultivated vocalism of the *prima donna* is like the lilt of the contadina whom she impersonates.

Goldsmith must have been in the condition of the most forlorn beggar before he had gone forty miles from Leyden—nay, he must have been in a worse condition than that of any professional tramp; for the clothes on his back were not the coarse garments meant to withstand the weather, but those that he was accustomed to wear as a student. The month was February, and the roads must have been execrable. The word as applied to the highways of to-day conveys no idea of what the canal tracks must have been in Holland a hundred and fifty years ago, with the breaking up of the long frosts. On the best roads in England at the same period it was almost impossible for one to walk. They could only be traversed by waggons or by coaches that were but one degree better than waggons. They were as uneven as a mountain side, and the

ruts in winter were usually from two to four feet deep. The mud between these continuous trenches varied according to the geology of the country. In a clay soil it was possible for a horse to get bogged up to its withers, and in a chalky one it was possible for him to get so embedded as to make it necessary to have him hauled out by a team from the plough. The teams at the plough in the worse soil had easier work than the coach horses on the high road.

Every evening after doing his eight or ten miles—a good day's walking—he must have arrived at his destination worn out and caked over with mud—the mud of that day adding a fresh layer to the mud of the day before, unless the rain had been sufficiently heavy to wash all away. He must have welcomed a deluge every now and again. To be sure, it left him saturated and filthy, but it must have made him feel less like a pachyderm.

"Dr. Goldsmith," said Chamier one evening at the club, "what do you mean by the last word in the first line of your *Traveller?*

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow——

"Do you mean tardiness of locomotion?"

Goldsmith said "Yes."

"No, sir," cried Johnson; "you did not mean tardiness of locomotion. You mean that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude."

"Ah!" exclaimed Goldsmith, "that was what I meant."

Of course Johnson knew much more about it than the author. But we can imagine what recollections passed through Goldsmith's mind in that foolish pause which followed the question. "*Slow.*" What did the word mean? What does it convey to any one with even the smallest share of imagination? How could it possibly apply to the progress of a traveller on foot in early spring on the miry banks of the lazy Scheld?

But there the line stands, embodying the poet's recollection of the solitary figure that stood, worn out, resting on his staff, in the centre of the leafless landscape; or turning away in disappointment from the empty windows of a cottage to which he had been toiling for hours only to arrive and

find that it had been derelict for months. And no other habitation was in sight.

Remote, unfriended, melancholy, *slow*.

"No, sir," said Johnson. "You mean that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude."

Just so. Goldsmith sat grimly silent after his ready assent. They knew much more about it all than he could tell them.

To us there is something heroic beyond the heroism of the usual pursuer of the literary life in his day, in the figure of Oliver Goldsmith plodding along in hardship and humiliation to acquire the knowledge for which he hungered. He cannot have had any plans for his future; he cannot have had his eyes fixed upon any goal to which he meant to travel, and, having reached it, rest satisfied with the result of his toil. He travelled without any idea of becoming a man of letters in the end, and he had no idea that he had been a poet from the beginning. He did not know that he was going through all this hardship of travel because he was a poet, and acting under the impulses of a poet. He knew nothing about it. All that he knew was that he must learn at any cost the things he wanted to learn—the cheerfulness of poverty, the charm of simplicity, the heroism of plodding, and the joy of getting closer every day to the meaning of life, stripped of the artificialities of civilisation. It was this travel-time of his life that was his real education. At last he had reached the frontier of the estate to which he was unconsciously the heir, and he found himself on the roadside in Switzerland, with a pen in his hand, writing the first lines of the truest poem that his century had produced.

Remôte, unfriended, melancholy, slow.

"Tardiness of locomotion," "Sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude." There did not come upon that man much sluggishness of mind when he sat him down in the majestic solitude of the Alps to write that poem, though he needed the assistance of Johnson to say what he meant by the most expressive word that it contains.

Goldsmith's exact itinerary is very doubtful; but it is

certain that he visited in turn, though in no regular order, Flanders, France, Germany, Switzerland, and various parts of Italy. In his writings and conversation in later years he showed such familiarity with every one of these countries as could only be the result of a close personal observation of the place and its people. He was qualified to write on his arrival in England the most interesting book of European travels that had ever been published. We have no doubt that he approached the booksellers with a proposal for a volume embodying his experiences, and that it was rejected on the spot. The booksellers would shrink from associating themselves with the account of his adventures offered to them by a man who had accomplished the "grand tour" in a style that deprived it of every sense of grandeur. One has only to glance at some of the books of European travellers of that day to become aware of the sort of stuff with which these gentlemen delighted to be associated. The vapid youth in charge of a "governor"—governor was the masculine of governess in those days—proceeding languidly and expensively from country to country for a year or two, in a vain attempt to acquire that indefinite quality known as *ton*, carrying with him in his train a valet de chambre and servants in charge of a waggon-load of trunks—this was the sort of traveller whose observation took the form of platitudes which crystallised into a publication in two or more volumes of print which the booksellers sold by the thousand, when the traveller was a gentleman of good family. The booksellers loved a title-page with a title upon it, attached to the name of the traveller who professed to be the author, but who was only the person who paid the author and the printer —the latter usually taking precedence in point of payment— a coat-of-arms surmounted by a coronet stamped on the leather cover—this was the book of travels that people liked other people to see lying on their table; and it had undoubtedly a decorative value; it was beautifully printed, and not only beautifully, but strongly, bound as well.

This being so, what chance would a volume have that purported to be the itinerary and experiences of a vagabond doing the "grand tour" in tatters?

That is what the booksellers would have been certain

to ask when Oliver Goldsmith, unknown to fame and known only to famine, went to them with his proposal to write an account of the previous year of his life. They were wrong if they imagined that such a book would not have sold by the ten thousand. They knew their public as little as Colman knew his public when he protested that the vulgarities of Tony Lumpkin and the company at the "Three Pigeons" would not be tolerated. They had had no experience of the capability of genius to transmute the ungenteel into the acceptable. They were mistaken, for as certainly as Goldsmith had written the book of his travels so certainly would it have been accepted as the best travel book of his generation, just as his *Vicar of Wakefield* was the best novel, his *Deserted Village* the best poem, and his *She Stoops to Conquer* the best comedy of his generation.

But he found that—according to the booksellers—there was no market for such a work. He had, however, travelled, and he might turn his travels to a genteel account by writing, if he wished, an *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe;* that was a work there might be some money in—a little money for the author, if he could obtain a patron to permit his arms and coronet to be stamped upon the cover.

In due course he wrote this *Enquiry*, and under his hands it turned out to be quite genteel as well as interesting. The marvel is not that it was done so well but that it was done at all. It bore no stamp of a nobleman upon the cover, but every page bore the stamp of a writer whose literary style had survived the vicissitudes of vagrancy abroad, and was to survive the degradations of drudgery at home.

From a few portions of this work, as well as from many incidental references in his essays, his novel, his first poem, and his *Animated Nature*, it is possible to form some idea of the places which Goldsmith visited after leaving Leyden. We should know much more had his cousin, the daughter of his uncle Contarine, preserved the letters which he wrote to her from Louvain, Rouen, and other towns in which he found himself. But she, too, must have been greatly in need of candle-papers, and these precious letters of Goldsmith's shared the fate of those he sent to numerous other friends

in Ireland. There is a story told by an ingenious Frenchman of a thief who, in order to conceal the bank-notes which he had stolen, wrapped them round the candles in the sconces as the police arrived to search his house. Before he had an opportunity of recovering them, however, the candles were lighted. We cannot doubt that his cousin's house was admirably illuminated, and that the candles were quite firmly fixed in their sockets.

From Holland he passed through Flanders, touching at Louvain, where it is believed that he obtained his medical degree, though even this is doubtful; for it would seem that so little interest did his friends take in him, not one of them thought it worth while asking him where he got his diploma, and he himself regarded the distinction so lightly that he never alluded to the place of its origin, and when he had abandoned his last attempt to practice he ceased to call himself "Doctor." His indefatigable early biographers, who in the face of extraordinary difficulties unearthed several curious facts concerning him, were baffled in their attempts to solve this mystery—one might reasonably have believed that it would be the least mysterious incident in which he was concerned—for they found, on applying to the University of Louvain for information, that all the records of the institution had been destroyed during the revolutionary wars.

We are inclined to believe that it was at Louvain he got his licence to practice, one reason for coming to such a conclusion being that if ever he had enough money to pay the fees it must have been within a short time after his leaving Leyden and before his uncle's fatal illness, which began when he was in Italy nearly a year later. He must have realised some money by the sale of his books, wardrobe, and general effects on departing from Leyden, and at Louvain he may still have had something left, and resolved to get rid of it, for the first time wisely. It is also possible that his uncle, learning of his last *contretemps* in Holland, sent him a sum of money, insisting, at the same time, on his spending it in obtaining as speedily as possible a diploma to practice the profession which had been chosen for him. These are, however, the merest conjectures. The syndicate who wrote the memoir which appeared in the edition of his collected works under Bishop Percy's editing,

suggested the likelihood of his having got his degree at Padua, where, on the same authority, it is stated that he remained for six months. That he had a medical degree there can scarcely be a doubt. When he visited Oxford in the company of Johnson in February 1769 he was admitted a member of the University, *ad eundem gradum*, which he said was that of M.B. It is somewhat remarkable that he never made use in any way of his Dublin degree of Arts, though it might be fancied that to be B.A. of Trinity College, Dublin, would be held in much higher esteem than to be M.B. of Louvain or Padua. But it must not be forgotten that Johnson himself did not call himself "Doctor" though he had that degree conferred upon him by Dublin. It was only when his own University of Oxford paid him the same compliment of LL.D. that he assumed the title.

From Louvain Goldsmith passed on to Brussels, and thence into France. Here he remained some time, and does not seem to have been in want; he had at any rate enough money to attend the theatre and to resume with Rouelle the study of chemistry. He makes several references to his Paris experiences in the course of his writings, and some in *Animated Nature* to the lecture-rooms of Germany which he seems to have frequented, but under what credentials it is impossible to tell. He reached Switzerland, and had the privilege of being present in a room with Voltaire, whose place as one of the most brilliant, and certainly the most thoughtful, of all the philosophers of his day was fully appreciated by Goldsmith. It was probably due to a misprint or to an officious interpolation of an editor that Goldsmith was made in one of his writings to refer to his meeting with Voltaire in Paris. A nineteenth-century author, cultivating literature in the City of Cork, refers to Goldsmith's having "impudently stated that he had met Voltaire in Paris." It would be difficult even for a Cork *littérateur* to say where Goldsmith's impudence is to be found in connection with this statement, which appeared in a volume that did not even bear Goldsmith's name. If he did not meet Voltaire in Paris, he certainly met him in Geneva. There is impudence in this connection, but it is not on the part of Goldsmith.

It was during his stay in Switzerland that he began his

Traveller. Among the "Alpine solitudes" he sketched out the poem and wrote some parts of it. He went to Berne and Basle and climbed Jura; later there are traces, though never very distinct, of his passing into Italy and visiting Milan, Florence, Verona, Mantua, and Padua. It has been assumed that he was also at Venice for a short time, but the foundation for this assumption may be questioned. If, however, he reached some of these cities of many memories, he must have found himself almost daily at some place of interest—a village surrounded by olives, a ruined remnant of former splendour in the form of an old castle commanding from the summit of a great rock a long valley such as "savage Rossa" loved to paint; a monastery with its well-cultivated garden of herbs, and its ragged hedges of roses; a group of peasants' huts huddled comfortably together in the shade of an old wall over which a fruit-tree clambers, throwing out boughs that suggest the horns of the goats browsing on the herbage among the stones.

Some of the lines in *The Traveller* suggest a very vivid recollection of an Italian scene:

> As in those domes, where Cæsars once bore sway,
> Defac'd by time and tott'ring in decay,
> There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
> The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed.

These lines surely embody a recollection of an actual scene that had stimulated his imagination. He must have become familiar with the usual landscape of Northern Italy, and associated himself more closely than most travellers have a chance of doing with the intimate life of the people. It would scarcely be safe to assume, however, that in the towns he lost no opportunity of becoming acquainted with their treasures of art.

It was when he was in Italy that he got news of the illness of his uncle and benefactor, Mr. Contarine, and set out for England, not necessarily on this account, for we do not hear that he had occasion to apply to his uncle for money, but simply because he had seen all that he could reasonably hope to see in the accessible parts of Europe.

How he contrived to support himself all this time it is

impossible to say with any degree of certainty. We have already referred to the great difficulties in the way of any one making an attempt to identify Goldsmith on his travels with one of his characters on foot in the places that he visited. He wrote as an artist, and undoubtedly encountered many adventures about which we hear nothing; and on the other hand he created many of the adventures of his creations. However humble the expenses of his journeys may have been, they must have been greater than he could defray by begging or borrowing on his various routes. We know how wretchedly poor the peasantry still are in almost every part of Europe that he visited; but in Goldsmith's day their condition was even worse. They might perhaps give him permission to pass a night in an outhouse, if an outhouse were available, and they might have been so grateful to him for his flute-playing as to share with him their evening meal of rye-bread and goat's milk, but they could go no further, and he would still have to procure breakfast and dinner on the day following this not excessive hospitality. Even this estimate is founded upon an assumed experience of the most fortunate class of peasantry—that of Northern Italy—and of the most highly favoured in regard to climate. How did he live in the winter months when he found himself in a miserably poor country? He could not hope to come upon empty outhouses or barns with the same regularity that a traveller comes upon inns in these days. But even if he was so incredibly fortunate, he could not have spent night after night in wet garments under such conditions.

And these are not the only considerations that make the problem of his maintenance a difficult one to solve. He might possibly have been able to procure his daily bread; but then comes in the very pertinent question which the Scotsman put to the minister who was assuring him that he had no need to be despondent at the birth of the second set of twins, but to trust in Providence to feed them: "Ay, maun; but what aboot the claes?" "What aboot the claes?" we may ask in considering the question of Goldsmith's means at this time. He was not likely to wear the rough garb of the peasant, serviceable though it might be, and he certainly could not wear it during his sojourn in the towns on his route. His

town life must be considered quite apart from his vagabond life in Europe. His flute would never be the means of procuring for him lodging and board for two or three months at a time, and unless he had been respectably habited he would not have dared to show his face in the lecture-rooms or the theatre, which he undoubtedly frequented. Moreover, it became evident in after years that he had made himself in some measure familiar with the current literature of the countries in which he sojourned, and he could not have done this unless he had been respectably dressed and had money in his pocket.

It is when one goes into these details of his travels that one finds oneself in difficulties. It is easy to dismiss the subject in a few lines that present him as the picturesque figure of the philosophic vagabond—a sort of eighteenth-century troubadour with all the engaging qualities of the troubadour of Italian opera, whose guitar is played by a musician in the orchestra, and who can always find a sympathetic circle of supernumeraries to shower gold upon him (with a suspiciously tinny jingle). It is easy enough to dismiss the question and its responsibilities by saying that he travelled through Europe on foot and maintained himself by playing the German flute alternately with entering into disputations at the Universities which apparently thrived by giving handsome rewards to disputants. And perhaps, after all, that is the best way out of the difficulties suggested by the question; for there can be no doubt that he was helped every now and again by his skill on the flute and possibly by the interest which his story—when told by himself—awakened among the authorities of some Universities or colleges in the neighbourhood of which he found himself. And here we may perhaps be pardoned for calling attention to the fact that although Boswell ridiculed his stammering and stuttering and his invariably saying the wrong thing—although Boswell also records Johnson's assurance that Goldsmith knew absolutely nothing, and that people only sought his company because they were pleased to be in the presence of some one more ignorant than themselves, yet he did not ridicule the notion of Goldsmith's supporting himself by disputations at the continental Universities. "He disputed his way through Europe," he records himself as

saying, when Johnson and he were discussing this point. It would, however, be ridiculous to suppose that Goldsmith sustained himself by his flute and his disputations under all the varied conditions of his travels.

An attempt was made to show that he gained some money by becoming "governor" to a young man who was making the grand tour—the son of an English pawnbroker who had inherited an uncle's fortune and a father's caution—a vulgar young cub who had reduced cheese-paring to a science. It was said that he travelled with such a youth as his "philosophic vagabond" describes, and the chances are that he actually did so, but only for a very short space of time. It is most likely that he went no further than to take a "lift" with a young man from one country to another; for even the most economically minded cub would hesitate before engaging as "governor" such a figure as Oliver Goldsmith must have presented on his travels.

If we might hazard a suggestion on a question which can never be solved in a way that would carry conviction to a critical reader, we would say that Goldsmith supported himself in the towns by giving tuitions at a very humble rate to a very humble class of the inhabitants, not waiting to "make a connection"—he could not afford to undergo the term of probation so necessary to any one desirous of obtaining permanent employment—but taking whatever pupils he could get for a few months. He could easily live on a franc or two a day, and he might possibly have made so much in the way we suggest. This is, however, the merest conjecture, and is far from being a plausible one. But at least it should not be rejected on the ground that he was unacquainted with the tongue of the country in sojourning in which he had a chance of trying the experiment. His knowledge of French and other languages was sufficiently accurate to prevent him from making himself as ridiculous as he made out young Primrose to be when he tried to earn a fortune by teaching English to the Dutch.

That he borrowed some money from his friends and that his uncle sent him some can scarcely be doubted. After all, considering his way of life and his mode of travel for the year that he passed in this way, the sum of fifty or sixty pounds

would have served to carry him through his most expensive periods, which he spent in Paris and Padua; and by the aid of his combined schemes of borrowing, drawing on his uncle, and teaching, he managed somehow to evade starvation—though he must have felt its shadow hanging over him more than once—and to retain enough to pay to the captain of the smack that bore him from Dieppe to Dover in February 1756.

It should not be taken for granted that he invariably went on foot from country to country and from place to place. It must be remembered that just a year elapsed between his leaving Leyden and his arrival at Dover. Now, if he passed six months, as it is said he did, in Padua, what space of time are we to allow for his stay at Louvain, Paris, Rouen, and Florence? We know he sojourned for several weeks in Paris; but even if no more than two months represented the aggregate of the time he gave to all these cities, only four months were available for his traversing on foot at least two thousand miles! He was a good walker, no doubt, but such a task would have been far beyond his powers. We are inclined to think that the compilers of his *Life* under the direction of Percy were in error in stating that he was for six months in Padua. We have been unable to find in the course of his works any evidence of his stay at that fascinating town being equal to half the time he spent in Europe after leaving Holland. If he had been at Padua for so long, we are pretty certain that Padua would take a more prominent place than it does in his references to Italy. Only by the strictest economy of his time could he have covered all the ground that he did, even assuming, as we must, that he got many a friendly "lift" on his way from town to town.

The volume of travel which he would have been ready to write on his arrival in England would certainly have been one of the most interesting ever written. He had not only met with many adventures, but he had a capacity for perceiving the details of interest in connection with every adventure. Every incidental narrative of travel that came from his pen, whether in his novel or his essays, gave evidence of his possession of this faculty to an extraordinary degree. The humour, the pathos, the quaintness—he appreciated to the

full these elements, and he had so keen a sense of artistic balance that he never overloaded a narrative with one element at the sacrifice of another. The evenness of every narrative—its gentle, musical flow, with here and there a wimple of wit or a ripple of humour, cannot but be felt by every reader who has an ear for the even purr and purl of a limpid stream. There is a twinkle every here and there in Goldsmith's easy style which suggests the ray of sunlight that glances through the foliage of the brambles upon the silver surface of the running brook beneath. It gives a reader a little surprise, and helps to increase the *rapprochement* which should exist between a writer and those for whom he writes.

This is only looking at the question of the interest and pleasure with which a detailed account of his year's travel would have been read by the many thousands whom his fragmentary passages dealing with this part of his life have delighted. But it is left open for us to say that such a record would have had an extraordinary value when regarded from more important standpoints. The incidental passages in his works referring to his travels make us aware of the fact that he was anything but a superficial observer, but that, on the contrary, he was a sagacious and penetrating student of the life and thought of the communities through which he passed. Unlike many travellers of his day, he was not content with getting in touch with what is called the intellectual life of a people—its art, its literature, its theatre and its science; he made himself acquainted with the mode of living of the peasantry in the fields and of the workers in the towns; he became, through the force of circumstances, as intimately acquainted with them as he was with the modes of the lecture-room or the debating-hall. In his own words he was resolved to see both sides of the picture, and he saw them.

Almost every reference that he makes in the course of his writings to the places which he visited proves the closeness of his study, the accuracy of his observation, and the sagacity of his conclusions. It is only necessary as an example of his capacity to refer to Letter LV. in the *Citizen of the World*, in which he gave the result of his observation of the French people with a force that was approached by no other writer in England.

"As the Swedes are making concealed approaches to despotism, the French, on the other hand, are imperceptibly vindicating themselves into freedom. When I consider that those parliaments (the members of which are all created by the Court, the presidents of which can act only by immediate direction) presume even to mention privileges and freedom, who, till of late, received directions from the throne with implicit humility;—when this is considered, I cannot help fancying that the genius of freedom has entered that kingdom in disguise. If they have but three weak monarchs more successively on the throne, the mask will be laid aside, and the country will certainly once more be free."

It is not surprising that this striking passage should have had attention directed to it when the Revolution which Goldsmith foreshadowed, but which did not take place until he had been dead for more than fifteen years, changed the whole aspect of France and the French people. The difference between the soundness and sagacity of Goldsmith's judgment and the shallow dogmatism of Johnson is just that which might be expected, considering the difference there was between the opportunities of the two men for arriving at a just conclusion on a matter that required to be observed directly, and not merely studied with the assistance of a handbook.

"Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "I would not give half a guinea to live under one form of Government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual. Sir, the danger of the abuse of power is nothing to a private man. What Frenchman is prevented from passing his life as he pleases?"

"*What Frenchman is prevented from passing his life as he pleases?*" This was the question asked by a great Englishman in 1772, in conversation with a great economist! Had Goldsmith been present and ventured to make a remark founded on his own acquaintance with the state of things in France, he would doubtless have been shouted down by Johnson and subsequently abused to Boswell as a person whose ignorance was so great as to cause his society to be fascinating only to people who had few chances of meeting

any one more ignorant than themselves. Of course Johnson knew nothing beyond what was reported to him of the condition of France and the French; but this fact did not prevent him from dogmatising upon both.

In the same letter in the *Citizen of the World* there are some admirable remarks about the German Empire and the likelihood of its falling to pieces through the number of the petty states of which it was composed lacking an adequate tie to bind them together and avert the disintegration and dissolution of the whole. Several times during the hundred years following the expression of this opinion its sagacity was proved. The fortunate appearance of a great King of Prussia with a still greater adviser behind his throne at the most critical period, saved Germany and rebuilt an empire out of the fragments of petty States that lay scattered around and only waiting to be made good use of by a master-builder.

But indeed there is scarcely a passage in Goldsmith's writings giving the result of his observations of the countries through which he went or in whose midst he sojourned, that does not force one to believe that, had he published his volume of travel, it would have been the most valuable of its kind, just as his novel, his poem, and his comedy, were each the finest that the century had seen.

CHAPTER X

PHYSICIAN, USHER, AND DRUDGE

1756—1757

WHATEVER may have been the hardships which Oliver Goldsmith encountered during his year of vagabondage on the continent, they could not have been greater than those which he suffered on his way to London from Dover. However great his "tardiness of locomotion" may have been beside "the lazy Scheld or wandering Po," it must have been outdone on his itinerary through Kent. England he found more inhospitable than Carinthia. He found here none of the Irish convents which had given him many a night's shelter in Italy, and he looked in vain for a friendly peasant with a taste for the music of a flute, and ready to offer a supper for a song. He landed at Dover starving, and after being at least three weeks on the road, he reached London still starving. His experiences during these weeks were varied and melancholy.

As some emigrants without money enough to pay for their passage across the seas worked their way from shore to shore, so he may be said to have worked his way from Dover to London. No one knows in how many characters he figured in order to get food by day and lodging by night. No one knows to what extremities he was reduced to keep himself from actual starvation. There he was, a fully qualified medical practitioner and a graduate in Arts of a University of high rank, and yet it is probable that he could only keep himself alive by picking up stray jobs like any other tramp who hung about the coach-road through Canterbury. He had nothing in view—he had no particular reason to turn toward London, so that there is probably some truth in the suggestion, made after his death, that he joined a company

of vagrant barn actors and took part in some of their performances. It is also probable that he applied for a place as assistant in a chemist's shop at one of the smaller towns that he reached on his way to London.

But when he found himself at last at his journey's end he was no better off than he had been at Dover. He was without friends or money, and for any one so situated London is the most terrible place on the face of the globe. It may be assumed that he did not make any delay in applying for even the humblest situation which could be filled by a qualified physician, who had studied at Edinburgh, Louvain, Paris, and Padua. We may be pretty sure that it was only when he found that no apothecary would have anything to do with him, that he endeavoured to find employment as an usher at a small school: the story that is told of his modified success—success meant to him at this time permission to live for another week—is credible, and it was credited by Percy and his friends. In the long catalogue of his miseries, however, his usherhood occupies an infinitesimal space. The only point of interest in this connection is to be found in the fact that, in the reminiscences of a lady who got it from her husband, there is the statement that Goldsmith, in acknowledging what may be called a negative act of kindness on his part, gave her husband a long and most diverting account of his travels on the continent. It is needless to say that this letter shared the fate of all the others written by Goldsmith on the subject. It was destroyed or lost. There was no reason why it should have been kept. The recipient could not have foreseen that every scrap of paper bearing the handwriting of Goldsmith would one day be regarded as precious.

After several months, in the dark shadows of which he disappears from view, Goldsmith is found mixing drugs for an apothecary named Jacob at the corner of Monument Yard on Fish Street Hill. Here he discovered a haven of rest for some time, but so stricken with poverty were even his best clothes, that when he went to pay a visit to Doctor Sleigh, who had been in the class-room with him in Edinburgh, he was not at once recognised. Afterwards, however, Sleigh showed him great kindness, though it is doubtful if his assisting

him to "set up" as a practitioner in Bankside, Southwark, should be accounted an act of genuine philanthropy. But as a physician Goldsmith is next seen—the comic Irish physician of a farce—Garrick dealt with him some years later—in a darned suit of rusty black, making good "business" (in the stage sense only) by concealing a patch on his waistcoat by the aid of his hat.

There can be no doubt that his Irish brogue destroyed all confidence in him as a physician. Those were the days when the profession of medicine included the profession of humbug—a condition of things which it is unnecessary to say has long ago ceased to exist. The doctor cultivated an air of ponderous wisdom, and spent years in the acquisition of a particular shake of the head which was supposed to suggest as much as Lord Burleigh's nod in the farce. What at the present time would be sufficient to stamp a man as a certain quack was indispensable to success in the medical profession in the eighteenth century. Of course, there were great physicians then who made names for themselves without such adventitious aid as the head-shake of wisdom or the hand-shake of learning; but the stock in trade of the general practitioner differed only slightly from that of the quack. Undoubtedly the public were responsible for the competition that was set up between the qualified doctor and the impudent pretender. In matters of physic the public have ever been fools, and a hundred and fifty years ago they were as easily led by the advertisement of the charlatan as they are now.

What chance had the ingenuous Dr. Goldsmith with his humourous face and comical twinkle and Irish brogue, in competition with one of the pretenders whom he has described—the purse-mouthed fellows who shook their heads and expressed the wish that they had been called in earlier? It is doubtful if he could ever have learned how to act the part; and in the meantime he had to face starvation. If he managed to get a shilling out of one patient, we may be sure that he presented it to another, with some advice, gratis, and we may be sure that the shilling was spent and the advice rejected. He continued in this sort of practice and in these practices until in a happy hour he found a patient who was in the

printing office of a Mr. Samuel Richardson, of Salisbury Court, and who had the sagacity to see that the doctor's business was not so lucrative as would cause him to reject an offer of supplemental employment for his leisure. Mr. Richardson himself was a gentleman who to his ordinary business as a printer added that of a novelist, and found the combination a very happy one—in fact the auxiliary soon became the more important trade with him. The result of negotiations was that Goldsmith became reader and corrector to the press to Mr. Samuel Richardson, the author of *Pamela* and a large number of equally anæmic stories of genteel life.

This was a stimulating move for Goldsmith. He was in touch with literature—as represented by Richardson—and the spell was completed when one day he caught a glimpse of the great Doctor Edward Young, the author of those murky moralisings known as *Night Thoughts*. A tragedy in blank verse was bound to follow the waving of the magic wand—with the point dipped in ink—so close to him; and he forthwith assumed the pose of the poet: it came very much more easily to him than did the pose of the practitioner. We get a glimpse of him in Doctor Farr's anecdote of his appearing in the house of his late fellow student in an old black coat, the pockets of which were overflowing with papers. Carrying out the traditions of the *rôle*, he pulled out his tragedy and began to read it to his friend. But the friend was wise. Hearing that the manuscript had been submitted to the judgment of Mr. Richardson, he refused to listen to it lest he should be tempted to precede Mr. Richardson in expressing an opinion on its merits. And that is the last glimpse which we have of the tragedy or of its author as reader to the press of Mr. Richardson. There is no record of his having been discharged by his employer for perpetrating a tragedy.

He next comes into view as assistant at the Peckham Academy of Dr. Milner, whose son, as well as Sleigh, had been in Edinburgh with Goldsmith. He seems to have been very well treated here, and to have been a constant source of merriment in the household. According to some of the stories told by the youngest of the ten daughters of Dr. Milner, his

humour was inexhaustible. He played tricks upon the servants, and amused the boys with his flute. He certainly must have been popular; and thus it is rather remarkable to hear that in after years the very name of Peckham was hateful to him, and that when he painted the lot of an usher in the most sombre tints he referred to Peckham. "I have been an usher at a boarding-school myself," he makes one of his characters say, "and may I die of an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be under-turnkey in Newgate. I was up early and late; I was browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys."

In a number of the *Bee* he writes with even greater bitterness: "The usher is generally the laughing-stock of the school. Every trick is played upon him; the oddity of his manner, his dress, or his language is a fund of eternal ridicule. . . . The poor wretch eternally resenting this ill-usage, lives in a state of war with all the family."

Now, to assume, as some of his biographers have done, that these bitter words were the result of his experience at Peckham, is, we think, to do a great injustice to Dr. Milner and his family, leaving the boys out of the question altogether, for, after all, a healthy boy is only a healthy barbarian. It seems to us that his unhappy experience of an usher's life was gained not at Dr. Milner's school at Peckham but at the situation which he obtained the previous year—one which involved his giving a false name, and consequently the writing of a letter to Dr. Radcliff, begging him not to expose his fraud—the negative act of kindness to which we have alluded. It is difficult for any one to reconcile the accounts given on good authority of his life at Peckham, with his own bitter expressions respecting the life of an usher. The man who is "eternally resenting ill-usage" is not the man, even if he should be as full of good nature as Goldsmith was, to play amusing tricks upon the servants, or to spend all his salary giving the boys treats of apples and cakes. The man who is living "in a state of war with all the family" of his employer, is not the man who would reply to the motherly remonstrance of his employer's wife for spending his money so foolishly, as Goldsmith replied to Mrs. Milner. "You had better, Mr. Goldsmith, let me keep your money for you

as I do for some of the young gentlemen," said Mrs. Milner. "In truth, madam, there is equal need," he replied.

The character of the relationship between the Milner family and himself is shown by this authentic anecdote; and it certainly was not one of mutual hostility. Nor can we believe that this motherly lady hated him "for his ugly face" or that these "young gentlemen" whom he treated to sweets and apples were the boys who browbeat him. The story is told of his meeting one of these "young gentlemen" some eleven or twelve years later, when the young gentleman had grown up and was visiting London with his newly-wedded wife. But Goldsmith recognised him immediately. "Come, my boy," he cried; "come, Sam, I am delighted to see you, I must treat you to something. What shall it be? Will you have some apples, Sam?"

It is clear that the recollections of the Peckham school which prompted this invitation were not those of an usher whose life had been made wretched by the insolence of the master, the vulgarity of the mistress, or the tyranny of the boys.

He was on excellent terms with the family; he took his meals at their table and he was free to join in the conversation even when a visitor was present; and of this privilege he took advantage one day when a gentleman named Griffiths was a guest. Dr. Milner and Mr. Griffiths were talking on some literary topic, for the latter was a printer and the proprietor of the *Monthly Review*, to which the former had contributed. Goldsmith's boldness in introducing his opinion on a subject in which he had so little concern as literature was not reproved. On the contrary, his remarks attracted the attention of the visitor who, after dinner, had an interview with him, and invited him to try his hand at literary work, offering him a "permanent situation"—the desideratum of every one who, though prudent, still has a wish to be connected with literature—if it was found that he had an aptitude for the work of criticism, on the magazine.

Goldsmith must now and again have had his aspirations. They had taken the form of a sketch of *The Traveller* which he had sent to his brother Henry from Switzerland, and of that tragedy which he had threatened to read to his friend from Scotland. But a line of his had never yet

appeared in print; and Griffiths' offer to him must have frightened him by its munificence. The prospect of reading and criticising and not merely having his opinions printed but actually paid for as well, was a dazzling one. He got a book to review by way of giving a sample of his capacity, and he must have felt that all his troubles were at an end when Griffiths decreed that the sample was satisfactory, and that the "permanent situation" was at his disposal at any time. What Dr. Milner may have said on the subject of literature—making literature, not merely printing it—as a profession, is not recorded. When a young man with aspirations has a chance of seeing his ideas put forth for all the world to read, nothing that any one may say on the subject affects him. Goldsmith exchanged the drudgery associated with the Peckham school for the duties associated with literature—that was, no doubt, how the exchange appeared to him at the moment.

The terms of his engagement with his employer were quite satisfactory—on paper. He was to have board and lodging in the Griffiths' house and to receive a salary into the bargain. This meant not merely ease of mind, but positive opulence. He had had some experience of the importance of permanency of board and lodging, mainly through his experience of the uncertainty of both; and he had come to think of anything over and above these necessities in the light of opulence. He must have felt that at last his luck had changed. Previous to going to Peckham he had been full of a scheme for travelling to decipher the inscriptions upon certain "written rocks" in Syria, for he had heard something vague about a salary of £300 a year being attached to the work, and the prospect had fascinated him as greatly as the gambling competitions in connection with some modern journalistic enterprise fascinate the back parlours of to-day. He must now have felt that there was a Providence looking after his interests in preventing him from getting the post which he had hoped for in connection with this highly endowed work of research. After all, the work of deciphering inscriptions in an unknown language, was bound to come to an end some day, though the chances certainly were that that day would be protracted; but literature was bound to go on for ever,

and good Mr. Griffiths held English literature in the hollow of his hand!

He remained in the employment of good Mr. Griffiths just five months. The situation did not turn out to be quite what it had promised to be. He was set down to a desk at nine o'clock in the morning and made to work for five hours without intermission, and then he was expected, after an interval, to remain in his garret to do all the odd jobs incidental to the production of the magazine, often working until late at night. But though it was his nature to be "idle"—and Griffiths did not spare him a reproach now and again bearing upon this point—he might have continued at his "job" had he been permitted to conduct it under the conditions which he supposed to be inseparable from the production of literature. But when he found out that the permanence of his situation was akin to the permanency of the situation of a slave in the plantations, and that it was so regarded by Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths, he began to see that he had only exchanged the drudgery of Peckham for the slavery of London.

He could not have been long in the employment of Mr. Griffiths before he became aware of the important fact that there was a Mrs. Griffiths, and that this lady's attention was equally divided between effecting economies in the house and structural alterations in the articles in the magazine. She starved her boarder at the table and she mutilated his work in the printing press. Whether or not her husband would have behaved differently if he had had a free hand, it is impossible to say. All that is certain is that if he held literary destinies in the hollow of his hand, his wife's hand was free and he was under her thumb.

Smollett, who was concerned in the production of a rival review, made some remarks about the Griffiths family in which he contrived to say very plainly what he thought of the pair. The man he affirmed to be a poor illiterate creature, and the lady he termed an "antiquated female critic." He was not very hard on them. But he had not that intimate domestic knowledge of them that Goldsmith acquired before he had been long under their roof. Goldsmith was fully qualified to describe them, but he never did so; he only left

their house at the end of five months, and, after a brief interval, went back to the school at Peckham where he was greatly needed. It is said that he had a quarrel with the Griffiths, and complained of the meagre cuisine and the meddling of the lady with what he wrote for the magazine, also accusing her husband of being impertinent to him and failing to treat him with ordinary respect.

De Quincey writes very strongly on the subject of Goldsmith's slavery under the Griffiths; but we are inclined to think that an equitable view of the situation is only possible if one considers it in connection with Mr. Griffiths as the proprietor and Oliver Goldsmith as an unknown contributor. The moment that one thinks of Oliver Goldsmith as the distinguished author, one's view of the case can scarcely fail to be distorted. We do not doubt that Goldsmith had just cause for complaint—whether he complained or not—and we have no doubt that he felt greatly disappointed when he found out what the literary life, as interpreted by the literary wife of Griffiths, meant; but we do not think that the "gravamen" of his complaint, to adopt a useful phrase, lay in the mutilation of what he wrote for the magazine. A literary probationer, such as he was at the time, may grumble if so much as a single line that comes from his pen is altered by an editor; but the ablest writers that ever lived have had to submit to such supervision even after they had become famous. At the present moment there are thousands of literary probationers, some of them of twenty years' probation, who do not think it any grievance to have to submit to the revision of an editor. A few years on a daily newspaper form an excellent discipline for a writer; and he soon learns that he has no more basis for a grievance on account of a precious half-column of his writing having a blue pencil mark run down it by an editor, than has the captain of a company of infantry, on account of the general's order to march his men to join the reserves instead of going into action immediately. If Mr. Griffiths had allowed Goldsmith's articles to appear in his magazine without reading them, he would, considering that Goldsmith was altogether without experience as a writer, have been guilty of gross carelessness. The question of the right of Mrs. Griffiths to interfere is

quite another one. It can easily be believed that if the woman was vulgar and illiterate and ventured to make her own interpolations in Goldsmith's articles, he should feel aggrieved; but if she was an able and discriminating lady he had no ground for complaint. But then it will be said that an able and discriminating lady would have discriminated better than she did between the relative importance of the family cuisine and the family magazine, and if this settled the question Mrs. Griffiths must be condemned. For that matter, if she has not actually been condemned she has remained with the indictment hanging over her for a century or so, of having failed to recognise the hand of genius in such writings of Oliver Goldsmith as she "touched up" before allowing them to appear in the *Monthly Review*.

We do not really think that, bearing in mind the fact that the articles in the review were unsigned, Goldsmith had reason to feel greatly aggrieved on account of their being severely edited by his employer or his wife; and we do not believe that, after the first month or two, he did feel greatly aggrieved on this account. As for the conditions under which he was forced to do his writing, we do not think that De Quincey was justified in his abuse of them; but our toleration is possibly due to our experience of the conditions under which such work is done in these days. To sit at a desk from nine in the morning until two in the afternoon, with an occasional night on duty, would not suggest much hardship to a literary probationer of to-day or, indeed, to a literary practitioner of reputation. There are scores of men in England to-day who write night after night articles for their newspapers every one of which contains a thousand words. In the course of a few years, every man of them "turns out"—that is how they refer to their work—more than Oliver Goldsmith wrote during all his life! To be sure, it must be admitted that in some cases the quality of the output is inferior to that of Goldsmith at his best; but we are not now talking of the genius that is accountable for the quality, but of the labour that is accountable for the quantity.

About the quality of Goldsmith's work for the *Monthly Review* a good deal might be said. The articles that he wrote in the five numbers were, as we have mentioned, un-

signed; but to a filed copy the careful Mr. Griffiths appended the names of his "hirelings"—the word employed by Smollett in referring to the writers for his rival. But even if he had neglected to do so it would require the possession of no great astuteness to enable one to identify Goldsmith's work; a good deal more would be needed to identify the passages interpolated by Mr. Griffiths or his wife. The style of the writing and the manner of treating every subject are eminently Goldsmithian. So we may add is the tone of the criticism, and so beyond doubt are the elements of interest which appear on every page. He never was otherwise than interesting, even when dealing with an uninteresting book. But the greatest praise that can be given to his criticisms is to say that they are critical. Eighty or a hundred years later literary critics started the fashion in the great quarterlies of making the incident of their having the name of a book at the head of their articles an excuse for the display of their own erudition or their own views on the period and the persons referred to by the author. A column of innocent criticism was followed by thirty or forty pages of matter which had, undoubtedly, a certain connection with the book, but which could not by any possibility be accepted as a criticism of its merits or demerits. These efforts constituted admirable essays; but they could in no sense be looked on as reviews. They might just as well have been written without dragging in the book which was the pretext for their appearance. But this cannot be said of Goldsmith's work in the *Monthly Review*. It is distinctly critical and illuminating. Without ever rising to the highest level possible to be reached in this sort of writing, it does so very nearly in some articles; and, at any rate, in reading it, no one with any power of discrimination could doubt that it was the product of a man of sound judgment, wide reading, some scholarship, and good taste.

Griffiths was a fool to part with the man who could turn out such work—that is, we are convinced, what a competent editor of a review would say after reading his articles. Any editor who understood his business would have held on to Goldsmith and not merely have allowed Goldsmith to hold on to him. Griffiths the printer understood his

business, but Griffiths the editor was a fool, and Mrs. Griffiths was his wife. As a matter of fact, the ability shown in Goldsmith's articles had attracted the attention of Hamilton, the proprietor of the rival magazine, and it will be seen that when Goldsmith severed his formal connection with Griffiths, he was engaged by Hamilton to write for the *Critical Review*.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XI

"BEING BORN AN IRISHMAN"

1757

We are inclined to believe that Goldsmith endeavoured to return to the duties which he had relinquished at Peckham in favour of the profession of a writer, but that, not being able to resume his position at once, he made an attempt to get a livelihood by promiscuous writing. He fared badly. What he wrote and for whom he wrote cannot be determined.

And this was a very inopportune moment for him to receive a visit from his brother Charles, who apparently came in upon him without a word of warning. Charles seems to have heard that he was in a good position in London and crossed from Ireland to try what he could do for himself by the aid of his brother Oliver's recommendation, and Oliver was, as usual, cheerful, and tried to make the best of a forlorn hope, but his visitor was not greatly impressed by his references to Otway and Addison. The latter had written his poem *The Campaign* in a garret, Charles was reminded. That was enough for Charles. Charles disappeared. He worked his way out to Jamaica and did moderately well for himself on that island, but he never saw his brother again. At their interview he mentioned that their brother-in-law, Daniel Hodson, had some time before got contributions in money on behalf of Oliver from various friends in Ireland. This was the first that Oliver had heard of such benefactions; but he at once wrote to thank Hodson for his kindness in the matter. This letter fortunately was not used as a candle-paper. It gives one the truest insight into the nature of the writer—the gentle, patient, grateful nature of the man who suffered more intensely than most men because he felt more intensely than most men, but whom suffering could not rob of his smile.

"DEAR SIR,

"It may be four years since my last letters went to Ireland, and to you in particular. I received no answer; probably because you never wrote to me. My brother Charles however informs me of the fatigue you were at in soliciting a subscription to assist me, not only among my friends and relations, but acquaintances in general. Though my pride might feel some repugnance at being thus relieved, yet my gratitude can suffer no diminution. How much am I obliged to you, to them, for such generosity, or (why should not your virtues have their proper name?) for such charity to me at that juncture. Sure I am born to ill-fortune to be so much a debtor and unable to repay. But to say no more of this: too many professions of gratitude are often considered as indirect petitions for future favours: let me only add that my not receiving that supply was the cause of my present establishment at London. You may easily imagine what difficulties I had to encounter, left as I was without friends, recommendations, money, or impudence; and that in a country where being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed. Many in such circumstances would have had recourse to the friar's cord or to the suicide's halter. But, with all my follies, I had principle to resist the one and resolution to combat the other. I suppose you desire to know my present situation. As there is nothing in it at which I should blush, or which mankind could censure, I see no reason for making it a secret; in short, by a very little practice as a physician, and a very little reputation as a poet, I make a shift to live. Nothing is more apt to introduce us to the gates of the Muses than poverty, but it were well if they only left us at the door. The mischief is, they sometimes choose to give us their company at the entertainment; and Want, instead of being gentleman-usher, often turns master of the ceremonies. Thus, upon hearing I write, no doubt you imagine I starve; and the name of an author naturally reminds you of a garret. In this particular I do not think proper to undeceive my friends. But whether I eat or starve, live in a first floor or four pair of stairs high, I still remember *them* with ardour, nay, my very country comes in for a share of my affection."

In this pathetic letter we get a hint as to the cause of his want of success in almost every enterprise in which he engaged. "Being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed," he wrote; and there can be no doubt that the prejudices existing at that time in England against the Irish were very great, and it is pretty certain that they were well founded. The examples of the Irish to be met with in London during the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth were such as caused the name of Irishman to be of evil odour in the nostrils of the people; and the brilliancy of the little group of which Burke was the centre and which included Goldsmith—after the publication of *The Traveller*—Tom Sheridan, and, later, his son, and, later still, Thomas Moore, did little to convince people that there are Irishmen and Irishmen.

This letter also suggests that the writer had been trying to make something out of his poetry. What verses he had written and published at this time we cannot tell; but possibly if any one had a mind to examine the files of the periodicals of the day, an occasional contribution might be found that would bear to be considered as his work. Most likely it is, however, that he made use of the word "poet" as suggesting to Mr. Hodson more of the wretchedness of his lot than would the words "literary man." Goldsmith would have had to invent the latter, but the former carried its traditions with it even to Dan Hodson of Lissoy.

Among his labours in these months was a translation entitled *Memoirs of a Protestant Condemned to the Galleys of France for his Religion.* This work, in two small volumes, bore the name "James Willington" on the title-page. The name conveyed as much to the public as the name Oliver Goldsmith would have done; that is all that can be said to account for the use of this pseudonym. There is no reason to fancy that Goldsmith was so confident of his future as a writer as to cause him to be ashamed to have his name associated with a commonplace translation of a commonplace book. With the publication of this thing, he turned his back for a time upon literature and resumed the *rôle* of the teacher. Whether he went once more to Dr. Milner or Dr. Milner sent for him, we cannot say, but we find him

back at the school at Peckham, only this time in a more responsible position than that which he had occupied the previous year. The fact was that Dr. Milner was in very bad health and stood greatly in need of a teacher capable of conducting the school at such times as he was indisposed. Thus the connection with Peckham was resumed; but it was clearly understood that it was not to be permanent. It appeared that Milner had promised Goldsmith to use his influence with a friend of his named Jones, who, in his turn, had influence with the East India Company, to obtain for him the appointment of surgeon to one of their factories on the Coromandel coast, and it was understood that his services at the school would terminate on his qualifying for the post.

The transaction seems to us to be rather a singular one. But we think that it may appear more plausible if we assume that Dr. Milner's son, who, as has been stated, had been with Goldsmith at Edinburgh, was one of the parties to the arrangement. He was in touch with the medical profession, and knowing of his father's illness as well as of Goldsmith's necessities, he was able to point out the advantages to both of the carrying out of an agreement on the basis just defined. Goldsmith, with his melancholy experiences of London and his longing for foreign travel, must have felt that at last he was on the highway to fortune, *via* Coromandel, and the Milners must have been glad to renew their connection with a man whom they could trust to carry on the school until the principal should be restored to health. Thus it was that Goldsmith found himself once again at Peckham, but with his eyes turned toward the golden East.

But there were certain preliminaries to the realisation of his golden dream, and one was the payment of the sum of ten pounds for the warrant, and of more than twice that amount for a proper outfit, though nankeen was a good deal less expensive than the velvet which he loved in gorgeous tints. In order to find all this money he set about writing a work which should appeal to the genteel readers who would have been shocked had he offered to them the incomparable volume of vagrancy that to-day we lament to be without. No doubt he had taken the counsel of the booksellers—Griffiths and the rest—on the subject, and the

result was *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe.*

The scheme was, we are sure, suggested to him by the booksellers; but who it was that advised him to take the only real business step that can be recorded against him, in connection with this or any other enterprise of his, has never been revealed. If we had not documentary evidence to prove that for once he acted like a man of business, we should refuse to believe that it was possible for him to have broken through the traditions of the man of letters which every day were being strengthened by the incidents in his career. But we actually find him writing to his friends in Ireland asking them to work up subscriptions for the book among their acquaintance. There was no law of copyright in Ireland at that time, and the consequence was that, if a book was successful on the other side of the Channel, it was promptly pirated by the Irish booksellers. Goldsmith was anxious to take the cream of the profits of the Irish sale, and he made the modest estimate of a hundred copies as likely to satisfy the eagerness of his friends to become associated with the success of his first book.

The result was what every Irishman, save only Oliver Goldsmith, would have predicted: his dear friends ignored his appeal. Some of them, when he had died famous, and when a memorial to him was placed in Westminster Abbey, spent their time boasting of their friendship for "dear old Noll Goldsmith"; but that was how they interpreted the claims of friendship when he was alive. Five shillings represented the difference between failure and success as an author to Goldsmith, and not one of them would promise to stand by him to this amount!

He wrote to his dear Ned Mills and to Bob Bryanton, who had been his companion on so many excursions on the river and the lake; he wrote to his Jane Lawder, with whom he had played duets at Kilmore, and to his brother-in-law, Daniel Hodson, but the result was the same: no matter in what direction his letters went, no one paid any attention to them.

So rare, thanks to the neglect of his correspondents, are the surviving letters of Goldsmith and so eminently charac-

teristic of the man are those that remain, it would be impossible for any biographer to refrain from quoting them. He wrote to Edward Mills as follows :

"You have quitted, I find, that plan of life which you once intended to pursue ; and given up ambition for domestic tranquillity. Were I to consult your satisfaction alone in this change, I have the utmost reason to congratulate your choice ; but when I consider my own, I cannot avoid feeling some regret, that one of my few friends has declined a pursuit in which he had every reason to expect success. The truth is, like the rest of the world, I am self-interested in my concern ; and do not so much consider the happiness you have acquired, as the honour I have probably lost in the change. I have often let my fancy loose when you were the subject, and have imagined you gracing the bench, or thundering at the bar ; while I have taken no small pride to myself, and whispered all that I could come near, that this was my cousin. Instead of this, it seems you are contented to be merely an happy man ; to be esteemed only by your acquaintance—to cultivate your paternal acres—to take unmolested a nap under one of your own hawthorns, or in Mrs. Mills' bed-chamber, which even a poet must confess is rather the most comfortable place of the two.

"But however your resolutions may be altered with regard to your situation in life, I persuade myself they are unalterable with regard to your friends in it. I cannot think the world has taken such entire possession of that heart (once so susceptible of friendship), as not to have left a corner there for a friend or two ; but I flatter myself that even I have my place among the number. This I have a claim to from the similitude of our dispositions ; or, setting that aside, I can demand it as my right by the most equitable law in nature, I mean that of retaliation : for indeed, you have more than your share in mine. I am a man of few professions, and yet this very instant I cannot avoid the painful apprehension that my present professions (which speak not half my feelings) should be considered only a pretext to cover a request, as I have a request to make. No, my dear Ned, I know you are too generous to think so ; and you know me too proud

to stoop to mercenary insincerity. I have a request it is true to make; but, as I know to whom I am a petitioner, I make it without diffidence or confusion. It is in short this, I am going to publish a book in London, entitled *An Essay on the Present State of Taste and Literature in Europe*. Every work published here the printers in Ireland republish there, without giving the author the least consideration for his copy. I would in this respect disappoint their avarice, and have all the additional advantages that may result from the sale of my performance there to myself. The book is now printing in London, and I have requested Dr. Radcliff, Mr. Lawder, Mr. Bryanton, my brother Mr. Henry Goldsmith, and brother-in-law Mr. Hodson, to circulate my proposals among their acquaintance. The same request I now make to you; and have accordingly given directions to Mr. Bradley, bookseller in Dame-street, Dublin, to send you a hundred proposals. Whatever subscriptions pursuant to those proposals you may receive, when collected, may be transmitted to Mr. Bradley, who will give a receipt for the money and be accountable for the books. I shall not, by a paltry apology, excuse myself for putting you to this trouble. Were I not convinced that you found more pleasure in doing good-natured things, than uneasiness at being employed in them, I should not have singled you out on this occasion. It is probable you would comply with such a request, if it tended to the encouragement of any man of learning whatsoever; what then may not he expect who has claims of family and friendship to enforce his?

"I am, dear sir, your sincere
"Friend and humble servant,
"OLIVER GOLDSMITH."

Quite in a different vein was his communication to Bryanton.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have heard it remarked, I believe by yourself, that they who are drunk, or out of their wits, fancy everybody else in the same condition: mine is a friendship that neither distance nor time can efface, which is probably

the reason that, for the soul of me, I can't avoid thinking yours of the same complexion; and yet I have many reasons for being of a contrary opinion, else why in so long an absence was I never made a partner in your concerns? To hear of your successes would have given me the utmost pleasure; and a communication of your very disappointments would divide the uneasiness I too frequently feel for my own. Indeed, my dear Bob, you don't conceive how unkindly you have treated one whose circumstances afford him few prospects of pleasure, except those reflected from the happiness of his friends. However, since you have not let me hear from you, I have in some measure disappointed your neglect by frequently thinking of you. Every day do I remember the calm anecdotes of your life, from the fireside to the easy chair; recall the various adventures that first cemented our friendship, the school, the college, or the tavern; preside in fancy over your cards; and am displeased at your bad play when the rubber goes against you, though not with all that agony of soul as when I once was your partner.

"Is it not strange that two of such like affections should be so much separated and so differently employed as we are? You seem placed at the centre of fortune's wheel, and let it revolve never so fast, seem insensible of the motion. I seem to have been tied to the circumference, and . . . disagreeably round like . . . in a whirligig . . . down with an intention to chide, and yet methinks . . . my resentment already. The truth is, I am a . . . regard to you; I may attempt to bluster, . . . Anacreon, my heart is respondent only to softer affections. And yet, now I think on't again, I will be angry. God's curse, sir! who am I? Eh! what am I? Do you know whom you have offended? A man whose character may one of these days be mentioned with profound respect in a German comment or Dutch dictionary; whose name you will probably hear ushered in by a Doctissimus Doctissimorum, or heel-pieced with a long Latin termination. Think how Goldsmithius, or Gubblegurchius, or some such sound, as rough as a nutmeg-grater, will become me! Think of that!—God's curse, sir! who am I? I must own my ill-natured contemporaries have not hitherto paid me those honours I have had such

just reason to expect. I have not yet seen my face reflected in all the lively display of red and white paints on any sign-posts in the suburbs. Your handkerchief-weavers seem as yet unacquainted with my merits or my physiognomy, and the very snuff-box makers appear to have forgot their respect. Tell them all from me, they are a set of Gothic, barbarous, ignorant scoundrels. There will come a day, no doubt it will—I beg you may live a couple of hundred years longer only to see the day—when the Scaligers and Daciers will vindicate my character, give learned editions of my labours, and bless the times with copious comments on the text. You shall see how they will fish up the heavy scoundrels who disregard me now, or will then offer to cavil at my productions. How will they bewail the times that suffered so much genius to lie neglected! If ever my works find their way to Tartary or China, I know the consequence. Suppose one of your Chinese Owanowitzers instructing one of your Tartarian Chianobacchi—you see I use Chinese names to show my own erudition, as I shall soon make our Chinese talk like an Englishman to show his—this may be the subject of the lecture:

"Oliver Goldsmith flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He lived to be an hundred and three years old . . . age may justly be styled the sun of . . . and the Confucius of Europe . . . learned world, were anonymous, and have probably been lost, because united with those of others. The first avowed piece the world has of his is entitled an *Essay on the Present State of Taste and Literature in Europe*,—a work well worth its weight in diamonds. In this he profoundly explains what learning is, and what learning is not. In this he proves that blockheads are not men of wit, and yet that men of wit are actually blockheads.

"But as I choose neither to tire my Chinese Philosopher, nor you, nor myself, I must discontinue the oration, in order to give you a good pause for admiration; and I find myself most violently disposed to admire too. Let me, then, stop my fancy to take a view of my future self; and, as the boys say, light down to see myself on horseback. Well, now I am down, where the devil *is I*? Oh Gods! Gods! Here in a garret, writing for bread and expecting to be dunned for a

milk-score! However, dear Bob, whether in a penury or affluence, serious or gay, I am ever wholly thine,

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"Give my—no, not compliments neither, but something . . . most warm and sincere wish that you can conceive, to your mother, Mrs. Bryanton, to Miss Bryanton, to yourself; and if there be a favourite dog in the family, let me be remembered to it."

The third letter, which was that to his cousin Jane Lawder, he might reasonably have expected to be successful. Her husband was in comfortable circumstances, and he could certainly have afforded the price of half a dozen copies, if he felt disinclined to bother his friends with this application of his wife's cousin. The letter was not written in any begging vein, it will be noticed. Mr. Lawder could not have been apprehensive from its tone that the writer was taking the first step to become a dependent upon the bounty of his house. If he had possessed any capacity whatsoever for forming an opinion, he would have perceived from this letter that the writer had at least a chance of doing something to place himself in a better position than any he had yet occupied; but it is more than possible that this Mr. Lawder, after consulting with the other country gentleman who had been made aware of Goldsmith's intention to become an author, arrived at the conclusion that such an ambition was a disgrace to the family. In Ireland in the eighteenth century authorship was held in as little account as scholarship. The attorney, whose business was looked on as too contemptible to admit of his sitting down at the same table as one of these coarse country louts, was still held in far higher esteem than a writer of books, however eminent the latter might be. Among the English country gentlemen the same impression remained; and even in London, the patron left his author to cool his heels among the footmen in the hall, while he attended to tradesmen who waited on him. Of course, in the case of the London patron, eminence counted for something. As soon as the author became eminent enough to have ten thousand patrons instead of one only, that one was quite ready to admit him through the exclusive doors beyond the ante-room. But if

an author wished to retain any self-respect—we assume that he started with some—he did well to make haste to become famous. As so few, however, became famous even at their leisure, we are afraid that not many retained their self-respect.

But if Mr. Lawder perceived a menace in the letter which his wife showed him with Oliver Goldsmith's signature, surely the sight of his handwriting and the sound of his happy humour ringing through the pages must have caused her memory to go back to the days when they had been together at Kilmore, when he had played his flute and she had jingled her harpsichord, before the judicial Dean had arrived at the rectory and sentenced Oliver to become a physician. One might at least fancy that the letter would have had such an effect upon her. Perhaps it had too; only the result of sending her memory back was to make her reflect upon the amount of money her father had spent upon the man, and to think that it was all spent to no better purpose than to make him an author—not quite an author—she would be just to him: he had sunk no lower than to hope to become an author.

This is the letter which she received:

"If you should ask, why in an interval of so many years, you never heard from me, permit me, madam, to ask the same question. I have the best excuse in recrimination. I wrote to Kilmore from Leyden in Holland, from Louvain in Flanders, and Rouen in France, but received no answer. To what could I attribute this, please, but to displeasure or forgetfulness? Whether I was right in my conjecture, I do not pretend to determine, but this I must ingenuously own, that I have a thousand times in my turn endeavoured to forget them whom I could not but look upon as forgetting me. I have attempted to blot their names from my memory, and, I confess it, spent whole days in efforts to tear their images from my heart. Could I have succeeded, you had not now been troubled with this renewal of a discontinued correspondence; but, as every effort the restless make to procure sleep serves but to keep them waking, all my attempts contributed to impress what I would forget deeper on my imagination. But this is a subject I would willingly turn

from, and yet, for the soul of me, I can't till I have said all. I was, madam, when I discontinued writing to Kilmore, in such circumstances that all my endeavours to continue your regards might be attributed to wrong motives. My letters might be regarded as the petitions of a beggar, and not the offerings of a friend; while all my professions, instead of being considered as the result of disinterested esteem, might be ascribed to venal insincerity. I believe indeed you had too much generosity to place them in such a light, but I could not bear even the shadow of such a suspicion. The most delicate friendships are always most sensible of the slightest invasion, and the strongest jealousy is ever attendant on the warmest regard. I could not, I own I could not, continue a correspondence where every acknowledgment for past favours might be considered as an indirect request for future ones, and where it might be thought I gave my heart from a motive of gratitude alone, when I was conscious of having bestowed it on much more disinterested principles.

"It is true, this conduct might have been simple enough, but yourself must confess it was in character. Those who know me at all, know that I have always been actuated by different principles from the rest of mankind, and while none regarded the interests of his friends more, no man on earth regarded his own less. I have often affected bluntless to avoid the imputation of flattery, have frequently seemed to overlook those merits too obvious to escape notice, and pretended a disregard to those instances of good nature and good sense which I could not fail tacitly to applaud; and all this lest I should be ranked among the grinning tribe who say very true to all that is said, who fill a vacant chair at a tea-table, whose narrow souls never moved in a wider circle than the circumference of a guinea, and who had rather be reckoning the money in your pocket than the virtues of your breast. All this, I say I have done, and a thousand other very silly tho' very disinterested things in my time, and for all which no soul cares a farthing about me. God's curse, madam! is it to be wondered that he should once in his life forget you who has been all his life forgetting himself?

"However, it is probable you may one of those days see me turn'd into a perfect Hunks, and as dark and intricate

as a mouse-hole. I have already given my landlady orders for an entire reform in the state of my finances. I declaim against hot suppers, drink less sugar in my tea, and check my grate with brick-bats. Instead of hanging my room with pictures I intend to adorn it with maxims of frugality. These will make pretty furniture enough, and won't be a bit too expensive; for I shall draw them all out with my own hands, and my landlady's daughter shall frame them with the parings of my black waistcoat. Each maxim is to be inscribed on a sheet of clear paper, and wrote with my best pen; of which the following will serve as a specimen. *Look sharp. Mind the main chance. Money is money now. If you have a thousand pound, you can put your hands by your sides and say you are worth a thousand pounds every day of the year. Take a farthing from an hundred pound and it will be an hundred pound no longer.* Thus, which way soever I turn my eyes, they are sure to meet one of those friendly Monitors; and as we are told of an Actor who hung his room round with looking-glasses to correct the defects of his person, my apartment shall be furnished in a peculiar manner to correct the errors of my mind.

"Faith, madam, I heartily wish to be rich, if it were only for this reason, to say without a blush how much I esteem you; but, alas! I have many a fatigue to encounter before that happy time comes, when your poor old simple friend may again give a loose to the luxuriance of his nature, sitting by Kilmore fireside recount the various adventures of an hard-fought life, laugh over the follies of the day, join his flute to your harpsichord, and forget that ever he starved in those streets where Butler and Otway starved before him.

"And now I mention those great names—My uncle—He is no more than that soul of fire as when once I knew him. Newton and Swift grew dim with age as well as he. But what shall I say?—his mind was too active an inhabitant not to disorder the feeble mansion of its abode; for the richest jewels soonest wear their settings. Yet who but the fool would lament his condition! He now forgets the calamities of life. Perhaps indulgent heaven has given him a foretaste of that tranquillity here which he so well deserves hereafter.

"But I must come to business; for business, as one of my maxims tells me, must be minded or lost. I am going to publish in London a book entitled *The Present State of Taste and Literature in Europe.* The Booksellers in Ireland republish every performance there without making the author any consideration. I would in this respect disappoint their avarice, and have all the profits of my labours to myself. I must therefore request Mr. Lawder to circulate among his friends and acquaintances an hundred of my Proposals, which I have given the bookseller, Mr. Bradley in Dame Street, directions to send him. If, in pursuance to such circulation, he should receive any subscriptions, I entreat when collected they may be sent to Mr. Bradley's as aforesaid, who will give a receipt and be accountable for the work, or a return of the subscription. If this request (which, so far complied with, will in some measure be an encouragement to a man of learning) should be disagreeable or troublesome, I would not press it; for I would be the last man on earth to have my labours go a-begging; but if I know Mr. Lawder, and sure I ought to know him, he will accept the employment with pleasure. All I can say—if he writes a book I will get him two hundred subscribers, and those of the best wits in Europe.

"Whether this request is complied with or not, I shall not be uneasy; but there is one Petition I must make to him, which I solicit with the warmest ardour, and in which I cannot bear a refusal, I mean, dear Madam, that I may live

"Your ever affectionate
and obliged kinsman,
"OLIVER GOLDSMITH

"You see how I blot and blunder, when I am asking a favour.

"*Temple Exchange Coffee House,*
"*near Temple Bar, Lond. Aug.* 15, 1758."

She paid no attention to this letter, with its blots and erasures, nor do we hear of her husband's making any move in the direction suggested by her cousin Oliver; and when some months had passed without bringing to him any response to his appeal for a simple act of courtesy, it would not have been surprising if her cousin Oliver had resolved

never again to be guilty of a business act. If he made such a resolution it was certainly one of the few to which he rigorously adhered for the rest of his life.

It will have been noticed that he made no mention of the Coromandel scheme in any of these letters; but we know of no adequate reason for his refraining from doing so. Later, however, he wrote to his brother Henry, telling him all there was to be told; and subsequently to Hodson, as follows:

"DEAR SIR,

"You cannot expect regularity in one who is regular in nothing. Nay, were I forced to love you by rule, I dare venture to say that I could never do it sincerely. Take me, then, with all my faults. Let me write when I please, for you see I say what I please, and am only thinking aloud when writing to you. I suppose you have heard of my intention of going to the East Indies. The place of my destination is one of the factories on the coast of Coromandel, and I go in quality of physician and surgeon; for which the company has signed my warrant, which has already cost me ten pounds. I must also pay £50 for my passage, and ten pounds for my sea stores: and the other incidental expenses of my equipment will amount to £60 or £70 more. The salary is but trifling, namely £100 per annum; but the other advantages, if a person be prudent, are considerable. The practice of the place, if I am rightly informed, generally amounts to not less than one thousand pounds per annum, for which the appointed physician has an exclusive privilege. This, with the advantages resulting from trade, and the high interest which money bears, viz. £20 per cent., are the inducements which persuade me to undergo the fatigues of sea, the dangers of war, and the still greater dangers of the climate; which induce me to leave a place where I am every day gaining friends and esteem, and where I might enjoy all the conveniences of life. . . . .

"You cannot conceive how I am sometimes divided. To leave all that is dear to me gives me pain: but when I consider I may possibly acquire a genteel independence for life, when I think of that dignity which philosophy claims to raise itself above contempt and ridicule, when I think

thus, I eagerly long to embrace every opportunity of separating myself from the vulgar as much in my circumstances, as I am already in my sentiments. I am going to publish a book, for an account of which I refer you to a letter which I wrote to my brother Goldsmith. Circulate for me among your acquaintances a hundred proposals, which I have given orders may be sent to you: and if, in pursuance of such circulation, you should receive any subscriptions, let them, when collected, be transmitted to Mr. Bradley, who will give a receipt for the same. . . . I know not how my desire of seeing Ireland, which had so long slept, has again revived with so much ardour. So weak is my temper, and so unsteady, that I am frequently tempted, particularly when low-spirited, to return home and leave my fortune, though just beginning to look kinder. But it shall not be. In five or six years I hope to indulge these transports. I find I want constitution, and a strong steady disposition, which alone makes men great. I will, however, correct my faults, since I am conscious of them."

CHAPTER XII

DE PROFUNDIS

1758-1759

But even the chance of getting rid of him by helping him to carry out his Coromandel plans, did not move any of his friends to action in respect of getting subscribers to the projected book, or of writing to him on the subject; for some time afterwards, in a letter to his brother, he says, "The behaviour of Mr. Mills and Mr. Lawder is a little extraordinary. However, their answering neither you nor me is a sufficient indication of their disliking the employment which I assigned to them." So much for Messrs. Mills and Lawder. Of the exertions of Mr. Bryanton on behalf of literature he could never have had much hope. Bob Bryanton was developing too rapidly into the typical Irish gentleman of the period. "Pray, give my love to Bob Bryanton, and entreat him from me not to drink," is a significant paragraph in this letter to his brother Henry. The whole letter should, however, be given in full; it is one of the most interesting of the far too meagre Goldsmith correspondence. We omit from the text the paragraphs we have quoted elsewhere:

"I shall the beginning of next month send over two hundred and fifty books, which are all that I fancy can be well sold among you, and I would have you make some distinction in the persons who have subscribed. The money, which will amount to sixty pounds, may be left with Mr. Bradley, as soon as possible. I am not certain but I shall quickly have occasion for it. I have met with no disappointment with respect to my East India voyage; nor are my resolutions altered; though, at the same time, I must confess it gives me some pain to think I am almost beginning the world at the

age of thirty-one. Though I never had a day's sickness since I saw you, yet I am not that strong and active man you once knew me. You scarcely can conceive how much eight years of disappointment, anguish, and study, have worn me down. If I remember right, you are seven or eight years older than me, yet I dare venture to say, that if a stranger saw us both, he would pay me the honours of seniority. Imagine to yourself a pale melancholy visage, with two great wrinkles between the eyebrows, with an eye disgustingly severe, and a big wig; and you may have a perfect picture of my present appearance. On the other hand, I conceive you as perfectly sleek and healthy, passing many a happy day among your own children, or those who knew you a child. Since I knew what it was to be a man, this is a pleasure I have not known. I have passed my days among a parcel of cool designing beings, and have contracted all their suspicious manner in my own behaviour. I should actually be as unfit for the society of my friends at home, as I detest that which I am obliged to partake of here. I can now neither partake of the pleasure of a revel, nor contribute to raise its jollity. I can neither laugh nor drink, have contracted a hesitating disagreeable manner of speaking, and a visage that looks ill-nature itself; in short, I have thought myself into a settled melancholy, and an utter disgust of all that life brings with it.—Whence this romantic turn, that all our family are possessed with? Whence this love for every place and every country but that in which we reside? for every occupation but our own? this desire of fortune, and yet this eagerness to dissipate? I perceive, my dear sir, that I am at intervals for indulging this splenetic manner, and following my own taste, regardless of yours.

"The reasons you have given me for breeding up your son as a scholar, are judicious and convincing. I should, however, be glad to know for what particular profession he is designed. If he be assiduous, and divested of strong passions, (for passions in youth always lead to pleasure), he may do very well in your college; for it must be owned, that the industrious poor have good encouragement there, perhaps better than in any other in Europe. But if he has ambition, strong passions, and an exquisite sensibility of contempt, do not send him there, unless you have no other trade for him

except your own. It is impossible to conceive how much may be done by a proper education at home. A boy, for instance, who understands perfectly well Latin, French, Arithmetic, and the principles of the civil law, and can write a fine hand, has an education that may qualify him for any undertaking. And these parts of learning should be carefully inculcated, let him be designed for whatever calling he will. Above all things let him never touch a romance or novel; those paint beauties in colours more charming than nature, and described happiness that man never tastes. How delusive, how destructive are those pictures of consummate bliss. They teach the youthful mind to sigh after beauty and happiness which never existed; to despise the little good which fortune has mixed in our cup, by expecting more than she ever gave; and in general, take the word of a man who has seen the world, and has studied human nature more by experience than precept, take my word for it, I say, that books teach us very little of the world. The greatest merit in the state of poverty would only serve to make the possessor ridiculous; may distress, but cannot relieve him. Frugality, and even avarice, in the lower orders of mankind, are true ambition. These afford the only ladder for the poor to rise to preferment. Teach then, my dear sir, to your son, thrift and economy. Let his poor wandering uncle's example be placed before his eyes. I had learned from books to be disinterested and generous, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being prudent. I had contracted the habits and notions of a philosopher, while I was exposing myself to the insidious approaches of cunning; and often by being, even with my narrow finances, charitable to excess, I forgot the rules of justice, and placed myself in the very situation of the wretch who thanked me for my bounty. When I am in the remotest part of the world, tell him this, and perhaps he may improve from my example. But I find myself again falling into my gloomy habits of thinking.

"My mother, I am informed, is almost blind: even though I had the utmost inclination to return home, under such circumstances I could not; for to behold her in distress without a capacity of relieving her from it, would add too much to my splenetic habit. Your last letter was much

too short, it should have answered some queries I had made in my former. Just sit down as I do, and write forward until you have filled all your paper; it requires no thought, at least from the ease with which my own sentiments rise when they are addressed to you. For, believe me, my head has no share in all I write; my heart dictates the whole. Pray, give my love to Bob Bryanton, and intreat him, from me, not to drink. My dear sir, give me some account about poor Jenny. Yet her husband loves her; if so, she cannot be unhappy.

"I know not whether I should tell you—yet why should I conceal those trifles, or indeed, anything from you?—there is a book of mine will be published in a few days, the life of a very extraordinary man, no less than the great Voltaire. You know already by the title, that it is no more than a catch-penny. However, I spent but four weeks on the whole performance, for which I received twenty pounds. When published, I shall take some method of conveying it to you, unless you may think it dear of the postage, which may amount to four of five shillings. However, I fear you will not find an equivalence of amusement. Your last letter, I repeat it, was too short: you should have given me your opinion of the design of the heroicomical poem which I sent you. You remember I intended to introduce the hero of the poem, as lying in a paltry ale-house: you may take the following specimen of the manner, which I flatter myself is quite original. The room in which he lies may be described somewhat this way:

> The window, patch'd with paper, lent a ray,
> That feebly shew'd the state in which he lay.
> The sandy floor, that grits beneath the tread:
> The humid wall with paltry pictures spread;
> The game of goose, was there expos'd to view,
> And the twelve rules the royal martyr drew;
> The seasons fram'd with listing, found a place,
> And Prussia's monarch shew'd his lampblack face.
> The morn was cold; he views with keen desire,
> A rusty grate unconscious of a fire.
> An unpaid reck'ning on the freeze was scor'd
> And five crack'd teacups dress'd the chimney-board.

"And now imagine after his solliloquy, the landlord to make his appearance, in order to dun him for the reckoning.

Not with that face, so servile and so gay,
That welcomes every stranger that can pay,
With sulky eye he smoak'd the patient man,
Then pull'd his breeches tight, and thus began, &c.

"All this is taken, you see, from nature. It is a good remark of Montaigne's, that the wisest men often have friends, with whom they do not care how much they play the fool. Take my present follies as instances of regard. Poetry is a much easier, and more agreeable species of composition than prose, and could a man live by it, it were not unpleasant employment to be a poet. I am resolved to leave no space, though I should fill it up only by telling you, what you very well know already, I mean that I am

"Your most affectionate
"Friend and brother,
"OLIVER GOLDSMITH."

All these letters which we have given, with very few and unimportant omissions from the original text, were written not from the school at Peckham but from London. Goldsmith had already left the school, possibly because it was seen that Dr. Milner's illness left no hope of his ever being able to return to his classes (he died a few months later) and arrangements had to be made by his son for the appointment of a permanent substitute; or perhaps, because Goldsmith found that he could not save enough out of his salary to enable him to meet the expenses of his outfit for Coromandel. He returned to his old work of writing for the Reviews, only this time he went to Hamilton instead of Griffiths; or rather Hamilton came to him, having been led to do so by his appreciation of Goldsmith's work on the *Monthly*. On the *Critical Review* he had a free hand, and ran no chance of having his writings garbled by the "goody" or "the gammer" of his former experience, as Smollett called Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths. When he returned to London he went into new lodgings, the house being No. 12 Green Arbour Court, Fleet Street. This was, in comparison with his former lodging, what house-agents call "a good address"; but it was one of a group that the humblest artisan of to-day would ignore. In Goldsmith's time it was the abode of the most

wretched of the town. In a room at the end of the rickety stairs, noisome and noisy, resounding with the squalls of the offspring of drunken parents, sat the poet who loved the open air and the scents of the woodland—the poet whose verses cannot be read without the reader being made conscious of the scent of the green fields and of the fresh breath of the forest. Here it was that he drudged at his desk while the viragoes in the passage quarrelled over their brats, or some other incident of that warfare which seems to be incessantly waging in and around the overcrowded dens that exist to make a mock of civilisation.

The horror of the picture of Goldsmith in his garret has been dwelt upon too frequently to require more than a passing word in this place. But no writer has, we think, laid sufficient emphasis upon the fact of the unhappy occupant's being not merely a man of genius, but a man capable of writing in a style that few writers have ever surpassed—a man not only of University degrees, but of education as well—a man who had a knowledge of several modern languages as well as of two of the ancient—a man who had made himself familiar with the people of almost every state in Europe, and with the arts and the sciences of Italy and Holland. It is when we remember not merely the accident of his genius, but the attainments of the man as well, that we can appreciate to the full the horror of his position in the midst of the rabble of Green Arbour Court.

Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves.

Milton's picture of Samson is a pitiful one; but not more pitiful than that of Oliver Goldsmith, B.A., M.B., in his garret at the head of those breakneck stairs, with only one chair and a dirty table on which he spreads his writing-paper.

For the accuracy of the picture we have to thank Percy, the kinsman of the great Northumberlands, who became Bishop of Dromore... Percy was the friend, who at the beginning of March 1759, "found him in lodgings so poor and uncomfortable that he should not think it proper to mention the circumstance, if he did not consider it the highest proof of the splendour of Dr. Goldsmith's genius and talents, that by the bare exertion of their powers, under every disadvan-

tage of person and fortune, he could gradually emerge from such obscurity, to the enjoyment of all the comforts and even luxuries of life, and admission into the best societies of London. The doctor was writing his *Enquiry &c.*, in a wretched dirty room in which there was but one chair, and when he from civility offered it to his visitant, himself was obliged to sit in the window."

The interest of the picture is heightened by the entrance of a little girl who dropped a curtsey and said that her mamma had sent to ask if the gentleman could oblige her with the loan of "a potful of coals." She had brought the peculiar coalscuttle with her; so that it was plain that his neighbours and fellow lodgers had come to know what was the nature of "the gentleman" who occupied that dirty room.

There he sat writing his *Enquiry into the State of Polite Learning* before the males of the den returned to their lairage at night to distract his attention by their loud exercise of a lore that could scarcely be defined by the adjective on his title page. When Washington Irving paid a visit to Green Arbour Court ninety years later, he found himself on the ragged fringe of the usual squalid raucous quarrel between the females—the males had not returned for the night—and he mentions that the *fons et origo* of the torrent of abuse which was hurled from staircase to staircase, was a wash tub, the right of possession of which was disputed with strident vehemence by these bare-armed termagants. This fact suggests that the locality had improved with the times. For obvious reasons there could hardly have been a dispute about a wash-tub in the old days.

But for the first few months of his residence at this "good address," Goldsmith's imagination was vivid enough to see beyond the paper-patched window-frames a prospect of waving palms along a coral coast with a blue sea shimmering in the sunlight out to where the blue sky bent to the horizon. The very name of the Coromandel coast would have been enough to bring such a picture before his eyes. He felt that he should only have to work for a few months longer to win his freedom from the Purgatorio where he was suffering, to the Paradiso on which his heart was set. In a few months all would be over.

In a few months all was over—his dream had vanished, and he was looking out of his window upon the dreariness of November hanging over the Fleet Ditch. The appointment was given to some one else. Without a word of explanation he was told that the situation was no longer vacant.

He never communicated to any one in Ireland or elsewhere what formality he had neglected, entailing thereby the loss of the post which he had believed to be within his grasp; but every one knows that the East India Company was simply a huge machine for the perpetration of jobbery. It was founded on jobbery and it was maintained by jobbery. Its own servants were taught that their pay depended upon their success in the art of jobbery; but for that matter, they should never have got so far as become the servants of the Company without its aid. The red tape of the East India Company remained undiminished until, through its bungling, the whole East was dyed a deeper crimson still. The invention of an excuse—if any excuse was thought necessary—to put off such a man as Oliver Goldsmith, would be an easy matter even for an apprentice standing at the roots of the pagoda tree, expectant of the shaking of the boughs. He may have been told that he had neglected to deposit his passage money—that a physician with a foreign degree was not eligible for an appointment under so patriotic a corporation as the East India Company—any excuse would have been reckoned an adequate one by the directors, even supposing that the matter ever was sufficiently far advanced to come within the cognizance of the Board, and if it was not thought to be adequate by the applicant, so much the worse for him. That was all.

He must have felt in a condition bordering upon despair when he was made aware of his failure to get the appointment, for we know what was the next move that he made to obtain a livelihood out of what he believed to be his proper profession. He made an application for the humble position of hospital mate, and in his eagerness to secure it he went so far as to beg of Griffiths to become security to a tailor for a suit of clothes in which to appear before the examiners. That resulted in a situation after Griffiths' own heart. The poor

hack was putting himself in his power. He could make his own terms for the carrying out of the favour, and his terms were four articles in the writer's best style for the *Review*. Goldsmith agreed, tucked the books for criticism under his arm, put on the new suit and marched before the examining board in due course.

The result is still to be seen engrossed in the records of the College of Surgeons:

"At a Court of Examiners held at the Theatre, 21st December, 1758 . . . James Bernard, mate to an hospital, Oliver Goldsmith, found not qualified for ditto."

Four days later, on the morning of Christmas Day, the wife of the man from whom he had his room came to him with a piteous story of her husband's having been arrested by bailiffs and of there being no food in the house for her children. She knew the quarter to come to with such a tale. Goldsmith relieved her necessities, but only at the sacrifice of the suit of clothes. A few days later he handed to an acquaintance the books which he had received for review, as security for the loan of a few shillings. The news of both transactions came to the ear of Griffiths, and he sent to Goldsmith demanding the return of the suit of clothes and with it the four articles which he had agreed to write in return for the obligation conferred upon him by his taskmaster. One knows the kind of letter that Goldsmith would write in reply to such a demand. The letter does not exist, but we know what it must have been as well as if it lay before us. Not a grovelling letter, not an exculpatory letter; but a simple straightforward confession of the circumstances which he believed in an emotional moment to justify his act, ending with a reiterated promise to work off his liability as speedily as was possible.

The character of Griffiths' response to this letter is also known to us, not by reason of our acquaintance with his style, but from reading the letter which it evoked from Goldsmith. This is given by Mr. Forster, into whose possession it came. It was found among the papers of Griffiths, methodically endorsed—for Griffiths was an excellent business man,

and was proving it daily at the expense of other men who were not—"Received in January 1759." "Its appearance harmonises with its contents," wrote Mr. Forster, "for there is nothing of the freedom or boldness of hand in it which one may perceive in his ordinary manuscript. . . . The pointing is imperfect and confused, nor is there any break or paragraph from the first line to the signature, but all concealment is ended in it, and stern plain truth is told."

The letter itself can only be described as heartrending. It represents the despairing cry of a strong man over whose head the waters have closed. It cannot be read without tears by any one who remembers the gentleness of the heart from which *The Deserted Village* came, the cheerfulness of the nature that produced *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the noble mind that dedicated *The Traveller* to his poor brother rather than to a wealthy patron. In the whole range of literature there is no more piteous protest than this uttered by a man of genius against the fate which has decreed that only by suffering all that man can suffer does one learn to speak the words of sympathy and hope for the healing of the broken-hearted.

This is the letter which Mr. Forster printed verbatim from the faded document he was fortunate enough to obtain :

"SIR,

"I know of no misery but a gaol to which my own imprudencies and your letter seem to point. I have seen it inevitable these three or four weeks, and, by heavens! request it as a favour, as a favour that may prevent somewhat more fatal. I have been some years struggling with a wretched being, with all that contempt which indigence brings with it, with all those strong passions which make contempt insupportable. What then has a gaol that is formidable? I shall at least have the society of wretches, and such is to me true society. I tell you again and again I am now neither able nor willing to pay you a farthing, but I will be punctual to any appointment you or the taylor shall make; thus far at least I do not act the sharper, since unable to pay my debts one way I would willingly give some security another. No sir, had I been a sharper, had I been possessed of less good nature and

native generosity I might surely now have been in better circumstances. I am guilty I own of meannesses which poverty unavoidably brings with it, my reflections are filled with repentance for my imprudence, but not with any remorse for being a villain. That may be a character you unjustly charge me with. Your books I can assure you are neither pawn'd nor sold, but in the custody of a friend from whom my necessities oblig'd me to borrow some money; whatever becomes of my person, you shall have them in a month. It is very possible both the reports you have heard and your own suggestions may have brought you false information with respect to my character, it is very possible that the man whom you now regard with detestation may inwardly burn with grateful resentment, it is very possible that upon a second perusal of the letter I sent you, you may see the workings of a mind strongly agitated with gratitude and jealousy. If such circumstances should appear at least spare invective, till my book with Mr. Dodsley shall be publish'd, and then perhaps you may see the bright side of a mind when my professions shall not appear the dictates of necessity but of choice. You seem to think Dr. Milner knew me not. Perhaps so: but he was a man I shall ever honour. But I have friendship only with the dead! I ask pardon for taking up so much time. Nor shall I add to it by any other professions than that I am, sir, your humble servt.

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"P.S. I shall expect impatiently the result of your resolutions."

The bitterness of the contempt which a reader of this letter cannot but have for the man who compelled it to be written is increased by a knowledge of his character. One could understand a high-minded gentleman feeling shocked at the doubtful probity that prompted Goldsmith's acts; though we know that it is just such a man that would be most generous in his treatment of his weaker brethren who have been guilty of weakness. But when we become aware of Griffiths' "record," our contempt for him takes another and a stronger form. If he could be accused only of waxing fat by keeping his authors lean, after the manner of Margery

Quether in Mr. Baring-Gould's fable, he might be dismissed with a shrug, and the trite remark that fatness on the one hand and leanness on the other means only business. If the bookseller—he did not call himself a publisher until many years had passed—was a good man of business and the author was a bad man of business, the former was bound to wax fat and the latter to get lean. But Griffiths not only ground down his authors—poor fools that they were!—taking every advantage of them that an unscrupulous taskmaster saw possible, until they were reduced from being drudges to being slaves—he was not content to use the ordinary business grindstone to effect his purpose, but became a swindler as well as a bully. It was well known that he was a shuffler and a sharper when he had the chance, and with the wretches who were foolish enough to place themselves in his power, he must have had many chances. Grainger, who knew him better than most people did, warned Percy against trusting him. "You must have little dependence upon Griffiths," he wrote. "Do not go on with him without a positive bargain." That was rather a significant hint as to the character of the man who played to get Goldsmith into his power, over that paltry transaction of the suit of clothes, and then rounded upon him, calling him a sharper and a villain—terms which he knew should have been applied to himself.

He made a mistake. He was a God-fearing Presbyterian and most regular in his attendance at his conventicle, so he had doubtless heard read many times that it was Jeshurun who waxed fat and kicked. He felt himself very well qualified to play the part of Jeshurun. He had never heard of any one getting lean and kicking. But now he had an example of a reversal of the usual code; and his astonishment must have been tinged with the pious horror that seizes the sanctimonious when they see a lewd fellow act in complete disregard of Scriptural precedent. It was the one who had got lean that treated the text with contempt: it was now the one who waxed fat that was kicked.

Piteous though Goldsmith's letter reads now, it must have sounded quite another note than the piteous in Mr. Griffiths' ear. He must have had the sensation of being kicked in every line. He must have felt the contempt of the writer

stinging him like a lash in every word—particularly in those words in which the writer acknowledged that he had been in the wrong. He had no mind to accept the challenge in the postscript. He had a thought for his own interests. He did not know where people would stop if once he gave them a chance of talking about him and the authors whom he starved in his garrets. It might interfere with his business to be talked about; so he thought it prudent to put aside his bluster and come to terms with an author who challenged him to do his worst, and awaited his decision with impatience.

"Gammer" Griffiths crawled down. What a pity it is that Goldsmith did not reproduce the scene of his coming to terms! It is, however, easy to imagine his unctuous assurance that nothing could have been further from his mind than to suggest that Goldsmith was a sharper and a villain, and that Dr. Milner, who had just died, knew how incapable he was of doing so. No, he might have written hastily, but all he meant to say was . . . but authors are always imprudent—yes, and impetuous. . . . What nonsense was that about a gaol? He would no more dream of letting a gentleman of Mr. Goldsmith's attainments, &c. &c.

And then came a suggestion of the terms for the clearing up of the whole business. The terms were simple. Griffiths wanted a life of Voltaire written to make a translation of the *Henriade* which he had in hand, large enough for a volume. The contract price for this was to be twenty pounds, and out of this the guarantee for the suit of clothes was to be deducted. So this detestable affair ended. Twenty pounds was a very fair price to pay for such a sketch as Goldsmith could write; and this fact enables us to estimate the effect which Goldsmith's letter had upon his taskmaster. Griffiths had a dread of publicity being given to the matter, just as a thief shrinks from the responsibility of playing the part of prosecutor, even in a case where he has right on his side, not quite knowing where the thing might end. Griffiths had his fears. He possibly saw how much could be made out of the affair by an unscrupulous rival with a powerful pen dipped in ink which Smollett seemed to have made specially with extra galls for his use in writing such criticisms as admitted of his dragging in the name of Griffiths and Mrs. Griffiths.

We have already said that Griffiths was a God-fearing Presbyterian; but however much he feared God, he feared Smollett more. Smollett had alluded to the pair as "Goody" and "Gammer," and to the editor as "the old gentleman who conducts the *Monthly*"; so that it might not be going too far to assume that there were strained relations between Smollett and himself, and he had no mind to give the *Critical* a conspicuous chance of referring to Griffiths' garret system of encouraging authors. That was how he came to see that a speedy *rapprochement* with Goldsmith was advisable, and so a fresh bargain on a generous basis was concluded. He was an excellent man of business.

But however detestable a sharper Griffiths may have been, Goldsmith's acts in regard to the suit of clothes and the books cannot be justified, though they have long ago been condoned. It is likely that he could have been successfully prosecuted for fraud by Griffiths; to be sure, his intent was not fraudulent in either case; but his acts were distinctly culpable from a judicial standpoint, and if he had escaped, when once they came under judicial cognizance, he might have been accounted an extremely lucky man. But the person who would make a strenuous attempt to impress this view upon the world of to-day would be wasting his time. There is an unwritten military law which decrees that if a soldier goes into action between his committing any offence and his trial, he is not liable to any subsequent penalty, no matter what the nature of his offence may be. The justice inherent in the principle upon which that decree is founded is recognised by every one; and instinctively the world will apply it to Oliver Goldsmith. His life was a constant campaign, and every day brought him into the forefront of the battle. Every day added to his scars, and yet he never gave in. He fought sturdily and manfully until, all imperfectly equipped for the contest, he succumbed just as victory was in view. That is how the world, which owes him so much, regards Goldsmith and his errors; and that is why no one who has read Goldsmith will tolerate the assumption of any coldly judicial attitude in considering an act of his, however blameworthy it would be if associated with the career of an ordinary man. It would be a waste of time to try to urge upon people

who have made Goldsmith part of their daily life, who cannot make a speech without introducing some words of his, who cannot converse with their neighbours without getting him to speak for them the phrase that makes for cheerfulness and friendliness and sympathy—it would be a waste of time, we repeat, to try to urge upon such people that the law is no respecter of persons. They will answer "So much the worse for the law. The law is no respecter of persons. No, but we are."

An answer would be ready to every logical and reasonable plea for the condemnation of Oliver Goldsmith for pawning a coat that he had obtained on another man's credit, in order to provide a dinner on Christmas Day for a poor woman and her children; and it is greatly to be feared that in this spirit the world would refuse to condemn him, even if the garment had been the ermine robe of the Lord Chief Justice or the billowy surplice of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

And the world would be right.

CHAPTER XIII

HIS FIRST BOOK

1759

It will be gathered that the pursuit of that *Enquiry into the State of Polite Learning* which was being maintained—with certain unavoidable breaks at which we have hinted in the foregoing chapter—was becoming a somewhat uncertain business. It would seem that it had to be laid aside to allow of the author's discharging his obligation to his task-master. It was in February 1759 that he wrote the letter, already quoted, to his brother Henry, in which he mentions that he spent four weeks upon the *Life of Voltaire*, and that it was, after all, "a mere catch-penny thing." The date shows that he must have begun this work almost immediately after his compromise with Griffiths; and it contained some passages which were clearly prompted by his recent experiences. Goldsmith was in advance of his time in his appreciation of the genius of Voltaire. Not merely did he show his admiration for his writings in this little sketch of his life, but several years later, when Sir Joshua Reynolds painted a grandiose portrait of Beattie, the shallow rhetorician, introducing into the symbolic group the demons of Infidelity, Sophistry, and Falsehood, giving the likenesses of Gibbon, Voltaire, and Hume respectively, to the trio—they were being driven into outer darkness by Beattie and a good angel using as a weapon the *Essay on Truth*—Goldsmith very nearly came to a quarrel with his friend the painter. "It very ill becomes a man of your eminence and character," said he to Sir Joshua, "to debase so high a genius as Voltaire before so mean a writer as Beattie. Beattie and his book will be forgotten in ten years, while Voltaire's fame will last for ever. Take care it does not perpetuate this picture to the shame of such a man as you."

But Beattie was having his day—a very short day it was—when Goldsmith uttered this protest, and the picture was finished, and Goldsmith was accused of being envious to a point of distraction of the man who, posterity has decreed, was unworthy to occupy a square inch of a canvas that contained three such figures as those depicted—to his lasting discredit—by Reynolds as flying from the imposing figure of the shallowest of their opponents. Goldsmith's judgment was truer than that of Johnson, with Oxford at his back, and the King, who gave Beattie his pension, at the back of the University.

But the *Enquiry* was at last finished and published by Robert Dodsley at the Tully's Head on April 2, 1759. The six months previous to this date had been the most momentous in the writer's life. The period included his several attempts to find a way of living that would make him independent of the booksellers. He was like the prophet Jonah fleeing from the inevitable, trying to evade the responsibilities that were thrust upon him by Destiny. He fled from the Nineveh of Paternoster Row and soon found himself, after an interval on stormy seas, thrown overboard from the East India Company's ship and absorbed by the whale in the form of the College of Surgeons; but he was soon got rid of by this powerful organism, so that there was nothing left for him but to face his destiny and adopt Letters as a business. It will be observed that he did it reluctantly. We have been told repeatedly that he was a man who was consumed by vanity. We do not find any hint of this weakness in the history of his life at this period. It is vanity that prompts hundreds of men to get their names printed on the title pages of books; but what is the impulse that drives a man to avoid such a sop to his vanity and take refuge in the friendly obscurity of such a post as that of hospital mate?

He had, unfortunately, little vanity and no real ambition. He was driven to Letters to keep himself from starvation, but his object was not achieved with any degree of permanency; he wrote incessantly and he starved frequently. So little vanity had he of his authorship that he made no stipulation that his name should be on the title-page of his first complete work that had a claim to be respectfully considered as

a book. The *Enquiry* bore upon its title-page the motto in Latin:

Tolerabile si Ædificia nostra diruerent Ædificandi capaces,

and also a motto in Greek; it bore also the names of the booksellers who had subscribed to its production, but the author's name was absent.

The whole of the book may be read at a single sitting by a modern reader; and it is worth such an expenditure of time, but not much more. Every page is delightfully written, and the work occupies a unique position in critical literature, owing to the fact of its being the first of the kind that was written naturally and simply, and not in the ponderous language of the commentators of the eighteenth century. That is how it has survived so many hundreds of volumes of "polite learning." Any inquiry into the present state of the volumes of polite learning published during that period would take the form of a coroner's inquest *post mortem*. They would require to be disinterred in order to be examined; but then the cause of their decease would be speedily revealed, and, incidentally, the reason of the survival of this effort of Goldsmith's. His style was full of liveliness, and liveliness means life in literature, though it might be fancied that a good many writers believed exactly the opposite. The majority of his contemporaries who wrote far more learnedly, have undergone all the processes of decay, sinking down by their own weight into the depths of obscurity—that region which is peopled with the shades of the Ponderous.

The *Enquiry* reads lightly and brightly even in these days, when the very subject on which it bears is unintelligible, as defined on the title-page. Who in these days has ever heard of "polite learning"? The phrase has no meaning for modernity. Even the word *belles-lettres*, which was borrowed from the French on the assumption that it would bring some of the gaiety of that people to brighten up the subject, became obsolete before the end of the last century, leaving us in England with no means of making ourselves intelligible when we have occasion to refer to it. It is taken for granted that we should have no reason to refer to it. The word *belles-*

lettres, like the phrase "polite learning," resembled the small shop standing between the two wings of the Universal Stores: it was merely a matter of time when it would be absorbed. The word "culture" represents the "trust" that swallowed up *belles-lettres*, and now when one speaks of culture one is intelligible—so at least it is to be hoped.

But we can still read Goldsmith's *Enquiry* with interest. It is cheerful throughout, and never so much so as when it refers to the woes of authors. This is, of course, looking at it from the standpoint of the general reader. The critical reader will perceive how the attempt to deal with ancient literature, as well as the modern literature of every European State, within the space that would not be sufficient for the adequate consideration of one very humble classic, could not be otherwise than superficial. It is superficial—delightfully superficial, the modern casual reader will say who wants to get through life and literature as easily as possible. It is very easy reading.

It is not, however, with the condition of literature in Europe but with the condition of the literary man in England that the *Enquiry* is chiefly concerned. The period was one of transition. Literature had always been regarded as a tender plant that could only come to maturity if protected from the coldness of the world; and its protector was called, very properly, the patron. It was an author's duty to find a patron for his book, and he usually went to the nobility in search of him, and, finding him, shared him with the ladies of the theatre, the keepers of the gambling hells, and private chaplains. Dr. Johnson was for some time a patron-hunter, and one of the most successful of his day—in spite of his failure to hunt down Lord Chesterfield for his Dictionary—for he achieved the supreme patronage of a pension for life. But the time was approaching when it was thought that literature might possibly be all the sturdier if its growth were independent of such protection, and the experiment was being made—at the authors' risk—in England. Goldsmith, being one of the authors, dealt with the question with great delicacy from their standpoint; and just as the question of the endowment of research has been discussed for some years in this country, he discussed the question of the endowment of authorship.

What he feared most was what he had the best of reasons for fearing—namely, that the alternative scheme to that of the patronage of the peer would be the patronage of the publisher. He did not reckon on the third alternative—namely, the patronage of the public. "The author, when unpatronised by the great, has naturally recourse to the bookseller. There cannot, perhaps, be imagined a combination more prejudicial to taste than this," he asserted. "It is to the interest of the one to allow as little for writing, and of the other to write as much as possible; accordingly tedious compilation and periodical magazines are the result of their joint endeavours. In these circumstances the author bids *adieu* to fame, writes for bread, and for that only, seldom imagination is called in; he sits down to address the venal muse with the most phlegmatic apathy, and, as we are told of the Russians, courts his mistress by falling asleep in her lap. His reputation never spreads to a wider circle than that of the trade, who generally value him not for the fineness of his compositions, but the quantity he works off in a given time. . . . Thus the man who, under the protection of the great, might have done honour to humanity, when only patronised by the booksellers becomes a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press."

Now although he lived to proclaim the booksellers to be his best friends, yet he had good reason to view with trepidation the passing of the power which goes with patronage, into the hands of the booksellers. Of course, the questions which he raised have been the subject of discussion in many countries and at various times. Philosophers talked largely half a century ago, and still more largely a quarter of a century ago, upon the splendid results that had been achieved by the appeal of authors from the patron to the public. But now that the public have shown exactly what sort of reading they want and the price they are willing to pay for it—when the "sound" reading department in the free libraries is resorted to by the few, and the most illiterate of the contents of the fiction department are read by the many—when the best magazines have had the lives crushed out of them by the competition of the most contemptible, sagacious people are shaking their heads and wondering if, after all, the business

of authorship has gained so greatly by the transfer of its protection from the solitary patron to the million patrons.

So far as the arts are concerned the question discussed by Goldsmith has been definitely answered by many countries, Eastern as well as Western. The patronage of the million has debased the art of China, Japan, and Persia; and in Italy, France, and England, the photographically illustrated newspaper satisfies the whole artistic cravings of the million, and the squat, padded arm-chair represents the ideal in furniture. The few who appreciate true art, which means good workmanship, will admit into their houses no furniture except what was made in the splendid days when the patron flourished, and, under his shelter, the arts.

Fifty years ago Goldsmith's plea for the patron would have been received with ridicule by the philosophers; but latterly they are inclined to shake their heads and wait.

One thing, however, is pretty sure, and this is that if Oliver Goldsmith had been even moderately well endowed out of any fund available for authors of merit, the Goldsmith whom we know to-day would not have existed. We know how Johnson, that excellent type of the literary man, who, having failed to find the patron for whom he went in search, held him up to contempt in a definition, and placed him nearest to the gaol in his list of cumulative ills of authorship—we know how Johnson, the lover of letters, spent his days and nights when he was endowed; and will any one say that Goldsmith would have become industrious when Johnson became indolent? It would have been a melancholy day for England when Goldsmith received a sufficient endowment to allow of his living without writing. He would have lived pretty much in the same condition that was his to the end of his life, but he would have lived in idleness. The development of any scheme of State endowment in his favour would assuredly not have meant the development of his own genius—that which was his by nature, without money and without price.

Everywhere in the course of his *Enquiry* he displays boldness of thought and fearlessness of language. He abused the magazines for which he had been writing, he abused the critics who failed to discriminate between the good and the

bad, and, worst of all, when he referred to the stage he said something that David Garrick took to be a sneer at himself. He suffered for the rest of his life through his independence of thought in this place. Garrick never quite forgot the line that he had taken in making him, as he thought, the subject of his inquisition. A short time after its publication Goldsmith applied to him for the favour of his influence when he was seeking for the appointment of secretary to the Society of Arts, and Garrick curtly refused his application. More than once at a later period, also, the actor showed that he had not forgotten the same offence, though he and Goldsmith were apparently on friendly terms; but his final revenge he certainly had when he wrote the mock epitaph, which has ever since been attached to Goldsmith:

> Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
> Who wrote like an angel but talked like poor Poll.

There never was perpetrated a greater misstatement. Whatever Goldsmith talked like, it was not poor Poll. Poor Poll only repeats the words of others; but Goldsmith's weakness was his originality, not only of thought, but of expression as well. There never was a mind so free from the trick of the parrot than his; and yet Garrick's jest has in the memory of millions done duty as an exhaustive biography of the man whose misfortune it was to hurt the *amour-propre* of David Garrick, and to have a name that was susceptible of being curtailed into a rhyme for "Poll."

CHAPTER XIV

THE "BEE" AND OTHERS
1759–1760

THE publication of the *Enquiry* did not create any particular stir in the world of letters. Griffiths, who was contemplating a retirement from business, having made as ample a fortune as most people did who, like him, were engaged in the slave trade, could scarcely fail to recognise the personal note in the reference to the tender mercies of the booksellers, and engaged one of the most notorious libellers of the day to abuse the book in the *Monthly Review*. Kenrick was the name of this wretch; and Griffiths found in him a willing tool to do his bludgeoning. He pursued Goldsmith to the end of his life, and when he was lying dead wrote a scurrilous quatrain about him, and so roused public indignation that the contemptible scoundrel who perpetrated it was compelled to fly from the town. But in spite of what Goldsmith had said about the power of the critics, it was not in the power of Kenrick or any of his gang of rufflers to make or mar such a work as the *Enquiry*. It was impossible for the book to achieve a huge success—no book that appeals wholly to a public interested in literature ever will—and it was equally impossible that a composition so abounding in charm of style could be published without attracting the attention of discriminating readers. Thus it was that it was read and commented on by thoughtful people, and inquiries were made respecting the writer. When one looks at the *Enquiry* nowadays, remembering how its production awakened a spirit of business enterprise in the author, causing him to try to capture the Irish market before it could be stocked with a pirated edition, one cannot but smile. "Polite learning" was not exactly the subject that was being eagerly discussed in Ireland

in the middle years of the eighteenth century. If Goldsmith ever did send the copies with which he threatened his bewildered brother, it is greatly to be feared that they were stared at by the Ballymahon critics, and that their comment on the matter would take the form of a confession that they could make neither head nor tail of it.

But before it had been published for long, Goldsmith was approached by a bookseller who did business at the Sign of the Bible in St. Paul's Churchyard, and who had been associated for several years with the issue of some of that periodical literature upon which the *Enquiry* had commented. The *Idler* and the *Rambler* were only two out of the enormous number of these productions which came into existence while the craze for magazines lasted. They appeared by the score and buzzed away in the light-hearted style of such ephemera. The *Trifler*, the *Templar*, the *Cottager*, the *Gentleman*, and even the *Sceptic* had representative magazines of a kind, and within a few weeks another dozen had been added to the long list. But Mr. Wilkie thought that there was room for still another. At least if there was not, no great harm would be done; and he believed that with Mr. Goldsmith as the sole editor and sole contributor, enough would be made out of the issue to pay him two guineas a week.

A single printing-press, a single compositor, and a single contributor—these were all that were needed for a new venture of this kind; so that, even if the circulation never passed beyond the unit which entered so conspicuously into the calculation of the needs of every department, the loss would not be extravagant to a man with many irons in the fire and the Bible on his sign-board. The result of his enterprise was a publication of thirty-two pages, crown octavo, stitched in blue covers, bearing the title the *Bee*, and the first number appeared on Saturday, October 6, 1759. It promised extremely well, as do most things of the sort; and some of them add performance to promise; but this fact does not prevent the public from tiring of them. In such a case nowadays what an astute publisher does is to drop the thing and issue another on exactly the same lines, only with a different name, and "run" it until the public once more become weary of its familiarity, and he finds it necessary to make another

change of title without a change of style. In Goldsmith's day there was no talk of "running" a magazine, but the same sound and sagacious policy was pursued. The *Bee* did not differ substantially from any of the literary insects that had buzzed or hummed or droned—most of them had droned—into notice during the previous year or two. This example of editorial industry went into eight numbers only; but a better eight numbers could scarcely be looked for. Every line of every one may be read to-day with interest and enjoyment.

The Introduction is delightful, being in the most characteristic Goldsmith vein. "There is not perhaps," it begins, "a more whimsically dismal figure in Nature than a man of real modesty who assumes an air of impudence, who, while his heart beats with anxiety, studies ease and affects good humour. In this situation, however, a periodical writer often finds himself, upon his first attempt to address the public in form. All his power of pleasing is damped by solicitude and his cheerfulness dashed with apprehension. Impressed with his terrors of the tribunal before which he is going to appear, his natural humour turns to pertness, and for real wit he is obliged to substitute vivacity. His first publication draws a crowd; they part dissatisfied, and the author, never more to be indulged with a favourable hearing, is left, to condemn the indelicacy of his own address or their want of discernment. For my part, as I was never distinguished for address, and have often even blundered in making my bow, such bodings as these had like to have totally repressed my ambition. I was at a loss whether to give the public specious promises, or give none, whether to be merry or sad on this solemn occasion. . . . In short, whichever way I turned, nothing presented, but prospects of terror, despair, chandlers' shops, and waste paper."

And then he draws a picture of the entrance of the publisher, who, perceiving his embarrassment, offered his assistance and his advice. "'You must know, sir,' he says, 'that the republic of letters is at present divided into three classes. One writer, for instance, excels at a plan, or a title-page, another works away at the body of the book, and a third is a dab at an index. Thus a magazine is not the result of any single man's industry, but goes through as many hands as a

new pin, before it is fit for the public. I fancy, sir,' continues he, 'I can provide an eminent hand, and upon moderate terms to draw up a promising plan to smooth up our readers a little and pay them, as Colonel Charteris paid his seraglio, at the rate of three-halfpence in hand and three shillings more in promises.'"

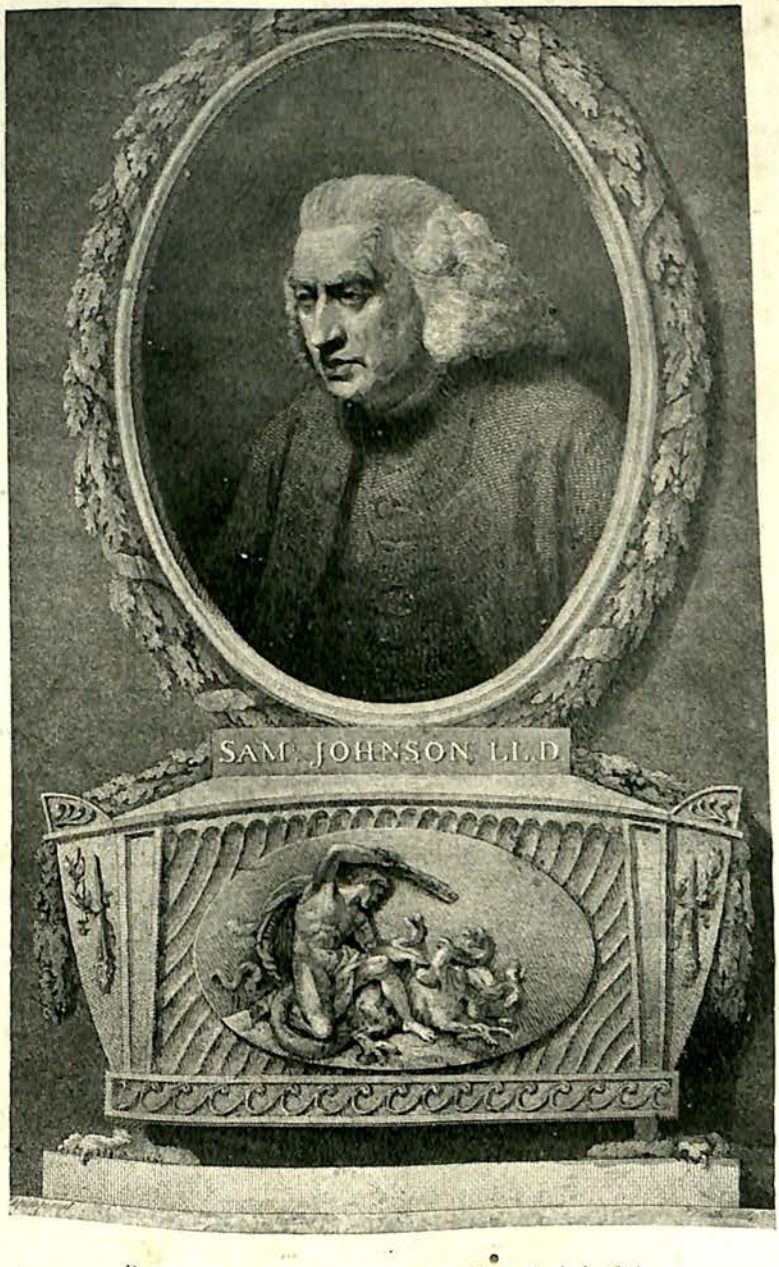
The "three-halfpence in hand," which the editor of the *Bee* offered to his readers, must be valued at the rate of exchange which an English sovereign claims during a revolution in a South American republic, when paper is plentiful and gold scarce. The first number makes an appeal to scholars, and flatters those who are not, by giving a Latin quatrain, imitated from the Spanish, *On a Beautiful Youth Struck Blind with Lightning*. It is well known in its English form. Then follow *Remarks on Our Theatres*, a chatty and discriminating paper which shows how closely and with what independence of judgment the writer studied the art of acting as it was exhibited in England; and it must be noted that he seemed anxious to remove from the mind of Garrick the idea which he had got from the offensive paragraph in the *Enquiry*, that he was not so highly appreciated as he deserved to be by the author. *The Story of Alcander and Septimius*, in the same number, is one of the tales of exaggerated virtue which were thought highly edifying during the eighteenth century; indeed this particular one adorned every school "Reader" well into the second half of the nineteenth. It was described as "Translated from a Byzantine historian." We are not guilty of any breach of confidence in stating that this "historian" was Boccaccio. An imaginary letter from Cracow and a short account of Maupertius made up the remainder of this number.

The paper *On Dress* which opened No. II. is one of the most amusing ever written by Goldsmith. The comedy of *Cousin Hannah* suggests a study of Mrs. Hardcastle. For the concluding paper, which deals with Mlle. Clairon, the French actress, Goldsmith drew upon his recollections of his stay in Paris. The desire to be all things to all readers is just a little too apparent in every number of the *Bee*; and one cannot avoid feeling that no reader would think that enough space had been given to his own particular

subject; so that it could not have surprised any one to learn at the outset of No. IV. that the venture was not becoming popular. The editor is frank but indiscreet in making such a confession. He should have remembered his advice given in his article *On the Use of Language* and refrained from acknowledging his want of success. "If you would ward off the gripe of Poverty, pretend to be a stranger to her, and she will at least use you with ceremony," he wrote a few weeks earlier. Yet at the beginning of No. IV., instead of affirming that the success of the *Bee* had surpassed his most sanguine expectation, he wrote:

"Were I to measure the merit of my present undertaking by its success, or the rapidity of its sale, I might be led to form conclusions by no means favourable to the pride of an author. Should I estimate my fame by its extent, every Newspaper and Magazine would leave me far behind. Their fame is diffused in a very wide circle, that of some as far as Islington and some get farther still; while mine, I sincerely believe, has hardly travelled beyond the sound of Bow Bell; and while the works of others fly like unpinioned swans, I find my own move as heavily as a new-plucked goose." After this very frank confession, and in spite of a delightfully humourous series of explanations and resolutions bearing upon the mystery of his want of success, every reader must have known that the end was in sight. Whatever chance *The Bee* might have had of making its way up to a paying point, it could not possibly survive so frank a reference to its unpopularity up to that moment. The end came, as we have already stated, with the appearance of the eighth number; but not before Goldsmith had added to his reputation, not indeed with the public, but with a few people of discernment, and among them there were some important acquaintances for a writer to make.

In the fifth number he had written *A Reverie*, in which he imagined a small stage coach, the name of which was the "Fame Machine," and the Coachman, an affable and seemingly good-natured fellow, informed him that he had but a few days returned from the Temple of Fame, to which he had been carrying Addison, Swift, Pope, Steele, Congreve, and Colley Cibber, and that he was now awaiting another coachful.



From the engraving by Heath after the portrait by Opie

After refusing to admit the author, because he had no better luggage than a copy of the *Bee*, others approached but were not allowed to take their place in the vehicle; at last, however, there came up "a very grave personage whom at some distance I took for one of the most reserved and even disagreeable figures I had seen, but as he approached his appearance improved, and when I could distinguish him thoroughly I perceived that, in spite of the severity of his brow, he had one of the most good-natured countenances that could be imagined. Upon coming to open the stage door, he lifted a parcel of folios into the seat before him; but our inquisitorial coachman at once shoved them out again. 'What, not take in my dictionary?' exclaimed the other in a rage. 'Be patient, sir,' replied the coachman, 'I have drove a coach, man and boy, these two thousand years, but I do not remember to have carried beyond one dictionary during the whole time. That little book which I perceive peeping from one of your pockets, may I presume to ask what it contains?' 'A mere trifle,' replied the author, 'it is called *The Rambler*.' '*The Rambler!*' says the coachman, 'I beg, sir, you'll take your place. I have heard our ladies in the Court of Apollo frequently mention it with raptures; and Clio, who happens to be a little grave, has been heard to prefer it to *The Spectator*, though others have observed that the reflections, by being refined, sometimes become minute.'"

Among the discriminating few who read this paper there was one who had the insight to perceive that the writer was a person of taste and judgment, and this reader was the "grave personage" with one of the most "good-natured countenances that could be imagined." He did not fail to recognise the capacity of the author, and his admirable descriptive powers. Although it would appear that he made no sign at the moment, yet there can be no doubt that when, a short time afterwards, his friend Percy asked him to accompany him in paying a visit to the author, he was influenced in his acquiescence by his recollection of the fifth number of the *Bee*.

In the same *Reverie* a complimentary reference was made to Smollett also, who was at once admitted to a place in the coach on account of his novel. "A well-written romance

is no such easy task as is generally imagined," said the coachman. "I remember formerly to have carried Cervantes and Segrais, and if you think fit you may enter."

Smollett approached the author of these sagacious criticisms a short time after their appearance, and even before the *Bee* was published in volume form at the price of half a crown, had asked him to contribute to a new magazine which he was starting with the title of the *British Magazine or Monthly Repository for Gentlemen and Ladies.* No proposition could have been more timely. Although Goldsmith had been writing a good deal for other periodicals while conducting the *Bee*, he must have been looking out for some new field of industry in place of that limited meadow of wild flowers from which he had been gathering honey. He had been contributing to the *Busybody* and the *Lady's Journal* and perhaps other magazines of the same type—it would be impossible to say exactly how many they were or what were their names, and possibly he himself would have been more puzzled than any one else to name the articles that came from his pen or to say definitely where they had appeared; for he seemed to scribble them off, draw his money for them—if he had not already drawn it in advance—and then dismiss them from his mind. He had an extraordinary facility for producing "copy," and the ease with which he wrote was only surpassed by the ease with which he procrastinated writing. Any excuse seemed to satisfy his unexacting conscience. If the story of his landlady's hearing an altercation in his room in Green Arbour Court after a visitor had called upon him one night, is not true, it has at least every semblance of truth. The visitor made his call, there were sounds of a heated argument, then of the door being slammed and locked and the key removed. Then came silence. What tragedy was being enacted at the other side of that closed door? We could fancy the good woman standing with the door of her own room open an inch or two, breathlessly awaiting the development of the situation, only we know that she dwelt in the midst of alarms in that unsavoury locality, and she must have schooled herself to control her excitement over the affairs of her neighbours. But after an hour of silence she heard the voices once more, only now in amicable tones.

The door was unlocked, the visitor reappeared, Dr. Goldsmith called for her, and she was asked to step round to the tavern and fetch supper for two. The story may be one of the usual sort that attach themselves to a whimsical man after his death: they are handed on from generation to generation, now being told of one man and then of another, but by no means indiscriminately, always with a sense of appropriateness; and this one has certainly got its right local colour. The most ordinary imagination will be equal to a perception of all that the narrative suggests—the proprietor of the magazine to whom an article has been promised, coming to the author for it, finding that it has not been written, refusing to go away without it, taking the law in his own hands, locking the door and swearing that it will not be unlocked until the paper has been written. Then the author sitting down on the chair—the editor on the window-seat—the hurrying, spluttering, scrawling quill for an hour—the tragedy is averted, and a merry supper takes its place.

So it was that Goldsmith wrote and procrastinated and tried to work off arrears, taking little account of anything he produced and only recognising his own writings when he found them in a magazine with which he had no dealings. In a preface to his volume of essays he says that, though they came pretty silently into the world, he cannot complain of their circulation. "The magazines and papers of the day have indeed been liberal enough in this respect. Most of these essays have been regularly reprinted twice or thrice a year, and conveyed to the public through the kennel of some engaging compilation. If there be a pride in multiplied editions, I have seen some of my labours sixteen times reprinted and claimed by different parents as their own. I have seen them flourishing at the beginning with praise, and signed at the end with the names of Philantos, Philalethes, Philelutheros, and Philanthropos. These gentlemen have kindly stood sponsors to my productions; and to flatter me more, have always passed them as their own."

But he cannot afford to keep Dr. Smollett waiting, and he agrees to write for his new venture, which is to appear on January 1, 1760. A few days later, Mr. Newbery, the bookseller, paid him a visit to acquaint him with another scheme

involving the publication of a daily paper to be entitled the *Public Ledger*, and to obtain his co-operation. Of course, he assented to the kindly proposition of a man whose subsequent services to him cannot be over-estimated. He promised to write two articles a week at the rate of a guinea for each, and in agreement with this arrangement, the series which was subsequently published in book form with the title of the *Citizen of the World* came into existence.

The essays which he also wrote for Smollett's *British Magazine* attracted a good deal of attention. They have continued to do so during the hundred and fifty years that have passed since their first appearance. Every generation has taken delight in the adventures of that "man in very shabby clothes" who was found seated on one of the benches in St. James's Park—the genial, chatty, brazen vagabond whose confessions bear the most marvellous resemblance to the whole truth that ever was possessed by an imaginary narrative, not even excepting the adventures of Robinson Crusoe; every generation has shaken the one available hand of the old privateersman whose cheerfulness is as plausible as his reasons for it are credible. All these characters which Goldsmith created only to do duty for a single article, and that a short one, are as highly finished as genius can make them. He took no trouble over any of them, hence they live and breathe as creations, and have none of the jerkiness of the puppet in their movements.

We fancy that it was his extraordinary ease of writing and of conveying to a reader this sense of ease—ability to do the latter is not invariably the result of easy writing—that so irritated Kenrick and his like. It must have been doubly annoying to them to observe how he never took his work of essay-writing seriously. What a delightful bit of raillery is the following, from one of these papers:

"We essayists, who are allowed but one subject at a time, are by no means so fortunate as the writers of magazines, who write upon several. If a magaziner be dull upon the Spanish war, he soon has us up again, with the Ghost in Cock Lane; if the reader begins to doze upon that, he is quickly roused by an eastern tale; tales prepare us for poetry; and

poetry for the meteorological history of the weather. It is the life and soul of a magazine never to be long dull upon one subject; and the reader, like the sailor's horse, has at least the comfortable refreshment of having the spur often changed."

This is the prelude to one of the best parodies imaginable upon the magazines of the period, from the *Modest Address to the Public* and the *Dedication to that Most Ingenious of all Patrons, the Tripoline Ambassador*, on to the instructions on the rites to accompany an incantation.

CHAPTER XV

THE "CITIZEN OF THE WORLD"
1760—1761

IT was in a spirit of levity that he started the *Chinese Letters* for Newbery's *Public Ledger*. We rather fancy that he had an idea of going no further than to write a parody that should not be so much a parody as a humourous skit upon the sham Orientalism which was in the air just at the time; but as the first letter, like many other things that are not written seriously but are read with great seriousness, attracted some attention, he published a second and a third, and then the possibilities in the idea of this sham Chinaman walking about London, jotting down his experiences, became plain to him, and he continued the *Letters* until they became the leading feature of the paper whose fortune they made. The grave criticism that has been uttered by authorities in regard to the *Citizen of the World* is, of course, that the imaginary Chinaman does not talk or think like a Chinaman; and this being so, the letters are without value. This is the usual type of the criticism which finds fault with a book for not being something which the author never meant it to be.

The preface to the volume indicates the exact spirit in which Goldsmith wrote the *Letters*. "The distinctions of polite nations are few," he says, "but such as are peculiar to the Chinese appear in every page of the following correspondence. The metaphors and allusions are all drawn from the East. Their formality our author carefully preserves. Many of their favourite tenets in morals are illustrated. The Chinese are always concise, so is he. Simple, so is he. The Chinese are grave and sententious, so is he. But in one particular the resemblance is peculiarly striking: the Chinese are often dull, and so is he. Nor has my assistance been

wanting. We are told in an old romance of a certain knight errant and his horse who contracted an intimate friendship. The horse most usually bore the knight; but in cases of extraordinary dispatch the knight returned the favour, and carried his horse. Thus in the intimacy between my author and me, he has usually given me a lift of his Eastern sublimity, and I have sometimes given him a return of my colloquial ease."

Then he goes on to describe a reverie, a favourite and fruitful device of his. He imagined a Fashion Fair being held on the frozen Thames, when every author who could carry his books there might probably find a very good reception. "I resolved, however, to observe the humours of the place in safety from the shore, sensible that ice was at best precarious, and having been always a little cowardly in my sleep." But noticing the success of several of his friends, he began to think, "If these meet with favour and safety, some luck may for once attend the unfortunate. I am resolved to make a new adventure. The furniture, frippery, and fireworks of China have long been fashionably bought up. I'll try the fair with a small cargo of Chinese morality. If the Chinese have contributed to vitiate our taste, I'll try how far they can help to improve our understanding. But as others have driven to the market in waggons, I'll cautiously begin by venturing with a wheel-barrow. Thus resolved, I baled up my goods and fairly ventured, when, upon just entering the fair, I fancied the ice that had supported an hundred waggons before cracked under me, and wheelbarrow and all went to the bottom."

This suggests the spirit in which the imaginary letters had been begun, though it was not continued through them. The point of the design was the European "making up" to a certain extent as a Chinaman and parodying in his observations, and particularly in his maxim morality, the many English writers who had attempted in all seriousness to give the moralisings of an Oriental when placed in the midst of English civilisation. No English writer ever succeeded as Montesquieu did, in carrying out such a scheme with complete success. The humour of the situation as conceived by Goldsmith consists in the man's forgetting the part that he is playing,

and revealing the Englishman or, funnier still, the Irishman, within the robes of the student of Confucius. The humour is the same as that of Sir W. S. Gilbert's *Mikado*. A Japanese official sings in the costume of Japan :

> Taken from the county jail
> By a set of curious chances ;
> Liberated then on bail
> On my own recognisances.

We are not disillusioned when we hear the Oriental making use of a familiar phrase of the Western police-court, because no illusion was ever meant. We are only amused. And so, when the "make-up" of Goldsmith's Chinese philosopher washes off in the first shower, we do not cry out that the actor is, after all, only an Englishman.

Sham Chinese had been fashionable in England for several years in 1760, just as the Japanese of the draper's shop was regarded as "precious" by the *poseurs* of what was termed a "high art cult" in England in 1881 ; and Goldsmith's sense of humour took him in the same direction as Sir W. Gilbert's took the author of *The Mikado*—only in the same direction, however ; Goldsmith took but a step or two to Sir W. Gilbert's strides. But it is scarcely a matter for surprise that the delicate humour of the former should be misunderstood when the Gilbertian treatment of *The Mikado* was regarded in all seriousness by English officialdom, and the representation of a piece that had nothing Japanese about it except the dresses, was prohibited lest it should give offence to the nation who had become our allies, not only politically but artistically, having years before taken over the music of *The Mikado* and played it daily on their bands. But then British officialdom is capable of anything.

Steele had made use of the idea, which Swift said he gave him, of an Indian describing his travels in England. It appeared in a number of the *Spectator*, and Swift complained in one of his letters that it had been wasted in a single article ; he had intended making a volume out of it himself. It is rather a pity that he was so confiding. Swift would have made a great satire if he had been able to realise his idea ; but assuredly his Indian would have had nothing of the Indian

about him except Indian ink. But his reflections would have made up a masterly satire upon England and the English. Walpole had actually preceded Goldsmith in making a Chinese philosopher, Xo Ho by name, write a letter to Lien Chi at Pekin, on the political situation in England. Then Percy had just risen from revising Wilkinson's translation of a Chinese novel; the Pagoda, which is so conspicuous a feature of Kew Gardens, had just been designed; and Thomas Chippendale was endeavouring to realise the most marvellous decorative feat that had ever been attempted even by the English cabinet-makers, whose feats were many and wonderful—the grafting of a Chinese design upon a French framework. It is pretty clear that China was in the air when Goldsmith began his *Letters*, and that, like other sensible people, he was laughing at the fad of the moment. But we are of the opinion that when he started his account in Newbery's *Ledger*, he had no intention of acting differently from Steele, in the *Spectator*: he did not mean to pursue the idea beyond a few issues. The fact that the *Letters* were not numbered as they appeared favours this contention, and gives us some ground for believing that the idea so appealed to Newbery—he knew its value by referring to the figures of the circulation of the paper—that he asked the writer to continue the *Letters* until he got notice to stop. These suggestions are, however, speculative and cannot be insisted upon. The interest and the value of the whole series remain the same whether the scheme of the Chinaman in London writing his letters twice a week for a year, was intended to be a feature of the paper from the first, or whether the original intention was only to print an occasional letter. What is certain is that the Chinaman was talked about, and that Goldsmith found himself in a position to enlarge the scope of the reflections of his *protégé*, until, before long, he had become the convenient vehicle for putting the author's, not the Chinaman's, views on many matters before the public. The "make-up" gradually wears off, and although the representative of the disciple of Confucius makes heroic attempts now and again to carry on the *rôle* with which he started, by indulging in a flowery sentiment (which might as well have been culled from the store of the medicine man of a North American Indian wigwam), he takes in no one.

He is a whimsical, good-humoured, tolerant philosopher, and, like one of his friends, there is no harm whatsoever in him.

Of the whimsical humour and wit and studies of character which make up the charm of the *Citizen of the World*, it is scarcely necessary to write a word. Like almost everything else that came from the same pen, they have become incorporated in our literature. Beau Tibbs may not be as finished a portrait as Sir Roger de Coverley, but he occupies a place of distinction in one of the panels in that gallery of English portraits in fiction which includes also the Man in Black, Corporal Trim, Parson Adams, Will Wimble, and that exquisite family group of the Primrose family. Addison, Sterne, Fielding, and Goldsmith have made the eighteenth-century wing of that gallery a room of old friends, the best of all company. No matter at what page we open the *Citizen of the World* we find something diverting. Dr. Whitwell Elwen, who performed the feat of writing immense essays on Goldsmith, Fielding, Boswell, and Johnson, without introducing a solitary original remark upon any one of them, affirms that the "happy artifice" of the stranger's commenting upon English customs, which came to so much in other hands, comes to nothing in the hands of Goldsmith. "It is simply as a collection of light papers upon the vices and follies of the day that the work must be regarded, as in all his speculations there is much that is commonplace; but he skims pleasantly over the surface of things, gives picturesque sketches of the men he met and the haunts he frequented, and intermingles observations which, whether grave or gay, bear the stamp of his kindly nature."

A more perfect example of kindly incompetence than this criticism of the *Letters* could with difficulty be imagined. The writer was one of the most earnest conservators of the conventional of fifty years ago; and it was part of his literary creed that no writer could be entertaining unless he was superficial, and that wisdom invariably was wrapped up in a cloak of dulness. The fact is that some of the *Letters* go as deep into the heart of things as any essays have ever done, and several anticipate in a startling way some of the most modern conclusions on social subjects. The abuses

of the Church, the abuses of the Courts of Justice, the abuses of the Legislature, are dealt with in turn, and never without the weak point being detected. Never was there a clearer range of vision and never was there a sounder judgment than that which is shown in these papers. In *Letter LXXIX.*, for instance, it is pointed out that "Penal laws, instead of preventing crimes, are generally enacted after the commission; instead of repressing the growth of ingenious villainy, only multiply deceit, by putting it upon new shifts and expedients of practising with impunity. Such laws," continues this eighteenth-century writer, "resemble the guards which are sometimes imposed upon tributary princes, apparently indeed to secure them from danger, but in reality to confirm their captivity."

And at the time he wrote, only here and there had a voice been uplifted against the atrocities of the Statute book. "Penal laws," he resumed, "secure property and a state, but they also diminish personal security in the same proportion; there is no positive law, how equitable soever, that may not be sometimes capable of injustice. When a law enacted to make theft punishable with death, happens to be equitably executed, it can at best only guard our possessions; but when by favour or ignorance Justice pronounces a wrong verdict, it then attacks our lives, since in such a case the whole community suffers with the innocent victim. If, therefore, in order to secure the effects of one man, I should make a law which may take away the life of another, in such a case, to attain smaller good, I am guilty of a greater evil; to secure society in possession of a bauble, I render a real and valuable possession precarious."

A thoughtful and mature plea for one of the most important reforms that ever engrossed the attention of a statesman. When the question was eventually forced upon the Legislature a good many years later, the very arguments made use of by Goldsmith were employed by the reformers. The venality of the paid magistracy—he had only to go round the corner into Bow Street to have an example of it—was fearlessly dealt with in the same *Letter*, and illustrated by aptness and force. "A mercenary magistrate who is rewarded in proportion, not to his integrity, but to the number he convicts, must be

a person of the most unblemished character, or he will lean on the side of cruelty; and when once the work of injustice is begun, it is impossible to tell how far it will proceed. It is said of the Hyæna, that naturally it is no way ravenous; but when once it has tasted human flesh it becomes the most voracious animal of the forest and continues to persecute mankind ever after. A corrupt magistrate may be considered as a human Hyæna; he begins, perhaps, by a private snap; he goes on to a morsel among friends, he proceeds to a meal in public, from a meal he advances to a surfeit, and at last sucks blood like a vampyre."

Then comes another apt illustration of the value of mercy as a policy. The emperor who hurried to quell an insurrection in one of his provinces, crying, "Follow me, and I promise you that we shall quickly destroy them," instead of revenging himself upon the insurgents, treated the captives with mildness and humanity. "How," cries his first minister, "is this the manner in which you fulfil your promise? Your royal word was given that your enemies should be destroyed, and behold you have pardoned all and even caressed some!" "I promised," replied the emperor, with a generous air, "to *destroy* my enemies. I have fulfilled my word, for see, they are enemies no longer; I have made friends of them!"

But while reform of the system is advocated, the author is keen to recognise the equality of the administration of the law in the case of the nobleman who had just been tried and sentenced to death for the murder of a servant. The allusion was, of course, to Lord Ferrers. He had just been executed at Tyburn. In another of the *Letters* reform of the laws of marriage and divorce is advocated, and, after a hundred years or so, attention was given to the author's words. In another he discusses in a thoroughly modern spirit some of the difficult problems bearing upon the distribution of wealth, and his conclusions are those which are fast gaining ground in many communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed there is scarcely one of the whole series which, if published to-day, would fail to attract the attention of the thoughtful, unless they might, like Elwin, be deterred from giving consideration to the Chinaman's comments, owing to the grace of style

in which they are presented and the humour with which they are illustrated.

Certainly the humour of some of these illustrations has never been surpassed by an essayist writing in English. What, for instance, could be better than the complaint uttered against the poets of the eighteenth century? "Pegasus, they say, has slipped the bridle from his mouth, and our modern bards attempt to direct his flight by catching him by the tail." The *Letter* in which this appears might have been written by a brilliant twentieth-century critic taking a bird's-eye view, as it were, of the poetry of the eighteenth—all except Goldsmith's poetry. But perhaps what is most surprising about the *Letters* is their diversity. There are some writers who only succeed in being interesting when they are dealing with a subject which they have made their own; but Goldsmith flies with lightness and ease from one subject to another, and never fails to interest or amuse, even when he is discussing a matter which one might reasonably be disposed to class among the heaviest that could be chosen for treatment. It should be noted also that when he moralises, his moralising is that of the broad-minded man of experience and observation—the man who has visited many peoples, and has acquired a spirit of toleration in regard to the faddist, the extremist, and even the fraudulent. He is no stern censor of the wickedness of the world, and it is greatly to be feared that he shows himself ready to condone rascality if it assumes a quaint or whimsical form.

But to attempt to sum up all the qualities which mark the *Citizen of the World* and give the *Letters* a distinction little inferior, if at all, to that which is associated with the *Spectator*, would demand a versatility of judgment equal to that of treatment, which the author possessed in so ample a measure. It is only when we have read the whole series that we can properly understand the grounds upon which Dr. Johnson based his high estimate of Goldsmith as a writer. Johnson was attracted to him while they were still appearing in the *Public Ledger*, and before he had done any of the work that gave him a position among the great writers of the day. They were sufficient to make the author

of *The Rambler* aware of the powers of Goldsmith, and to have a certain amount of interest in paying him a visit when Percy invited him to do so.

Elwin, to whom we have already referred, suggests that the *Letters* were not altogether a success when published in the newspapers, his ground for this opinion being the paragraph in the preface, where the author hints at his time having been unprofitably employed in this work. But against this view we have the evidence of an enemy—the man who, upon the occasion of the publication of the *Bee*, was delighted to have a chance of referring to the failure of the serial issue of those essays. Kenrick would only have been too pleased if he could have repeated the sneer in regard to the volumes of the *Citizen of the World*. But even Kenrick was bound to make the admission that their value had been recognised. "The public have been already sufficiently acquainted with the merit of these entertaining *Letters*, which were first printed in the *Ledger*, and are supposed to have contributed not a little towards the success of that paper," he wrote in the *Monthly Review*. But he goes a good deal further than this to remove any doubt that might possibly exist as to the advance which the publication of the *Letters* had given to Goldsmith as a writer; for he thought it prudent to try to make up for his previous insult, and he certainly would not have done this if Goldsmith's position had not been greatly strengthened. But still it seems strange to us, in these days, and after hearing so much about the overwhelming vanity of the author, to learn that, when the work was issued in 1761, in two volumes, Goldsmith's name was not upon the title-page. A paper of Newbery's suggested to Mr. Forster that Goldsmith had sold the copyright to that gentleman for five guineas. The document is a formal receipt signed by Goldsmith. "Received of Mr. Newbery five guineas, which, with what I have received at different times before, is in full for the copy [right] of the Chinese Letters, as witness my hand, Oliver Goldsmith, March 5th, 1762." It seems to us, however, that the mention of five guineas in this document was simply a matter of form. We know how Newbery was accustomed to act as his banker, and that Goldsmith had always a pretty large overdraft. When the amount of this

overdraft had increased to an alarming extent—alarming to Newbery—Goldsmith may have suggested the cancelling of the whole in exchange for the copyright of the book and an immediate honorarium of five guineas. The reference to "what I have received at various times" suggests such a squaring of accounts.

CHAPTER XVI

SIGNS OF APPRECIATION
1761—1762

It is certain that the appearance of the *Letters* in the *Ledger* meant a great advance to Goldsmith. He had begun to be talked about, not merely among the circle of booksellers' hacks with whom he had been mingling for two years, but by some writers of distinction, in addition to Grainger and Percy, who had appreciated him from the first. He was earning from three to four guineas a week, and this would have been ample for his needs if his needs had not included those of the needy as well. In spite of the worldly wisdom in his letter to his brother, which we have quoted, it appears as if he could never get rid of the custom of his country in money matters. We have pointed out that in Ireland no one except a curmudgeon ever thought for a moment of withholding a loan from any one who asked for it. The only adequate reason for not lending money was not having money—nay, in some instances, as we have shown, the possession of the means of raising money was regarded as sufficient to make the transaction effective; and Goldsmith more than once went without blankets in order to provide a beggar with drink. But if he lent his money freely when he chanced to have any, he borrowed quite as freely, so that he contrived to muddle through the year. That was in Ireland, the natural soil for the growth of muddling, and a plentiful crop of the political as well as the social and economic varieties has been forthcoming from time to time during the past three or four hundred years. In England, however, and particularly in that part of London which was irrigated—sometimes too lavishly—by the Fleet, the Irish system has never worked with complete satisfaction to all parties concerned

in its application. The borrowers remained borrowers and the lenders paupers. The news that Noll Goldsmith was in funds must have sent a thrill of excitement round the straggling circle of his associates; but it could never have lasted long. The Grub Street loafers around the bedraggled skirts of literature must have been four-deep in the square of Green Arbour Court awaiting his arrival from Newbery's counting-house, and his pockets were emptied before he got upon the breakneck stairs.

He formed some very doubtful friendships at this time. There was a certain club that offered him a choice between the thriftless and the disreputable, and, lest he might be embarrassed in his choosing, some of his own countrymen sought him out and—when they found that he was earning money—by forcing their companionship upon him, gave him an example of a combination of both. There was one Pilkington whom he had known in Dublin—an excellent type of the plausible rascal. He came to Goldsmith with a story that would not have imposed upon even the little girl who borrowed the coals from him when Percy was his visitor—a story of a duchess who collected the albino mouse, necessitating the approach of a naturalist to her grace in a decent coat, and a decent coat could not be had for less than two guineas. Of course Pilkington had the mice safe at the docks; but where were the two guineas to come from? Goldsmith was willing to oblige, but alas! he had only half a guinea in cash. Pilkington had doubtless many a time faced a more difficult problem. Goldsmith had a watch. It was taken to a pawnbroker's, and—that was the last he saw of it or of the naturalist for many a day.

Goldsmith's friend Cooke, who printed this story and several others in the *European Magazine*, makes it more plausible in one way and less so in another. He makes the rascal in need of the money to buy a cage for the mice. Two guineas for a cage for white mice! Still, it required to be a cage fit for the fastidious eyes of a duchess. Cooke, in the same number of the *European Magazine*, told of his being taken in by another rascal named Lloyd—he had been Churchill's friend—who accosted him in a coffee-house, expressing the hope that he was quite well, Goldsmith having never seen the man before,

"shrank back a little, and returned his inquiries with an air of distant civility." Lloyd explained in an offhand way that, though they had not met before, he thought that brethren of the pen should not stand on ceremony with one another, and asked him to supper that same night, the company to be "half a dozen honest fellows." This bait—it certainly promised a novelty to him in that locality—took with Goldsmith, and he went to the tavern where the entertainment was to be held. It was done on a most generous scale, but the honoured guest was left to pay the whole bill.

It was probably Newbery's observing how things were going with this ridiculous Irish genius that brought about the removal of the latter to a more reputable locality than Green Arbour Court, though one with a less picturesque name. Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, would certainly be accounted a better address by the house-agents, though it sounds commonplace by the side of the Court of the Green Arbour. The fact that the house belonged to a relative of Newbery leads us to believe that the change was suggested by the bookseller, who certainly did his best to keep Goldsmith free from the constant financial tangles in which he found himself through his culpable improvidence and still more culpable beneficence. Newbery, in fact, did his best to play the part which Mrs. Milner had suggested that she should assume in respect of his money. And if it should be whispered that Newbery made more than the customary banker's profit by the arrangement, we have only to examine the statements of the accounts between them to be made aware of the straightforwardness of every transaction. Newbery did his best for him compatible with doing his best for himself. If he did very well through his connection with Goldsmith, assuredly this connection was the most fortunate for Goldsmith of any that he had ever formed. If Newbery had not been an upright man of business he could easily have got anything that Goldsmith wrote for him for half the price he paid for it. The temptation for a man in the position which he occupied in respect of so thriftless a person as Goldsmith, to shrug his shoulders and ask himself what was the good of putting large sums into the hands of such a man when he only flung them away upon rogues and vagabonds, must have been great—it would

certainly have been too great to be resisted by Griffiths. But it may safely be said that if Goldsmith trusted Newbery implicitly, Newbery proved himself to be deserving of this trust. The author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, both by his reference to the good bookseller in one of the most delightful chapters, and by his reiteration of his belief that the booksellers were his best friends, showed that he knew he had every reason to feel grateful to John Newbery, and afterwards to his nephew Francis. Cooke, among his items of gossip, mentions that Goldsmith was constantly referring in the friendliest terms to the elder of the booksellers, asserting that he was the best of all patrons to authors in distress.

It is pretty certain that during these years he did a great deal of work for Newbery in that department of literature which the publisher had made his own. Newbery turned out juvenile books by the score, and the destructive instinct of childhood was a far greater source of revenue to him than the varying reading whims of their parents. He was able to pay for the instruction of the parents out of the profits made by providing the children with diversion; and it is pretty certain that the easy adaptability of Goldsmith to every form of writing commended itself to the bookseller when his stock of nursery literature stood in need of replenishing, as it must have done every month. It might not be impossible to discern the Goldsmith touch in many of these tales and poems if one had any means of obtaining them all, and leisure to pursue a search which would be like looking for a piece of gold buried in a field of five acres. The *Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog*, as well as that on *The Glory of her Sex, Mrs. Mary Blaize*, shows how well he wrote in a vein that children relish in verse; and we cannot doubt that these are but the survivors of scores of equally delightful trifles which dropped from his pen as easily as did his Dublin ballads for street use. The well-known *Goody Two Shoes* has been claimed for Goldsmith, mainly on the ground that James's Powders are praised in the course of the narrative, and it was well known that he had unbounded belief in this medicine; but Newbery believed in it much more ardently than did Goldsmith, and on much better grounds, for he was the proprietor of the Powders and he made a handsome revenue out of their sale. Excellent

business man that he was he would take good care not to allow one of his authors to miss an opportunity of saying a good word for them.

He went to his new rooms—*rooms*, not *a room* this time—toward the close of the year 1760, while the *Chinese Letters* were still appearing in the *Public Ledger;* and he probably made an effort to regulate his habits in conformity with the social advance which his removal suggested. But he seems to have felt that a complete severance from Green Arbour Court would be too much for him, so he retained at least one link with his old lodgings: he never failed to send his old landlady the material for many a dinner and many a supper from his more sumptuous table at Wine Office Court; and the likelihood is that his table was a good deal more sumptuous upon occasions than it ever had been in that bare room where, for the best of reasons, two people could not sit down together to supper. But, in his improved conditions of life, upon the occasion of the happy delivery of belated "copy" demanding celebration through the medium of a supper, each of the celebrants had a chair to himself. The accommodation at Wine Office Court was on a generous scale, and so of course were the incidental expenses of the new occupier. Where would be the good of having a room in which a number of his friends could sup—with a whole chair for every one of them—if he refrained from inviting them to supper?

There can be no doubt that he took care that the fine opportunities suggested by a dining-table and a complete set of chairs were taken advantage of; or, in case he omitted to do so, we may be sure that his friends would see to it for him. But however doubtful his visitors may occasionally have been, two came to him on the evening of the last day of May 1761, about whose position there could not be a second opinion. The Reverend Thomas Percy brought with him Mr. Samuel Johnson—he had not yet received his Oxford degree—to sup at the new lodgings, and their host was a proud man. But the incident was of greater importance to him than he ever had imagined it would be. It marked his admission not only into the inner circle of literature, but to a friendship which never failed him, and which came to his rescue upon at least two occasions of emergency,

brought him out of his difficulties, and set his feet upon solid ground.

Percy relates how, on his calling for Johnson at his rooms in Inner Temple Lane, he found him engaged in making an elaborate toilet, such as one might hardly imagine the occasion demanded. Seeing him in a new suit of clothes, a powdered wig, and with everything about him so perfectly dissimilar from his usual habits and appearance, he could not help asking what was the cause of this singular transformation. "Why, sir," said Johnson, "I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice, and I am desirous this night of showing him a better example."

A more amusing incident has never been described in connection with this group of notabilities. Johnson's solemn explanation, uttered out of the midst of his finery, is admirably in keeping with the self-consciousness of a man accustomed to old friendships in the way of garments, while appearing in all the unproved rigidity of new. Every one must sympathise with the elderly, shapeless man whose garments invariably hung loosely upon his big limbs, whose wig was usually a few sizes too small for him, and whose linen—"clean linen, sir, I have no passion for it," he admitted some years later—every one will sympathise with him upon this occasion. *Il faut souffrir pour être beau*, no doubt, or even *pour encourager les autres*, but within limits. The only redeeming element in the situation was the shortsightedness of the *beau*. No matter how many mirrors there were in his room, he could not see how he looked. But he must have felt it.

And then the notion of this simple-minded scholar, that all he had to do in order to convince a man who must have been in the habit of seeing him daily, that he was not slovenly in his dress or untidy in his habits, was to borrow a newly powdered wig, a good coat, and silk stockings, with practicable garters, shoes with buckles, and a laced hat, and appear in them—*once!* He only appeared once in this imposing disguise; neither Percy nor any one else records having seen him a second time suffering under the conditions of a self-imposed but unaccustomed tidiness, and we know that he returned to

the comfort of "bagginess," and remained in it for the remainder of his life; he never meant to do otherwise; but his knowledge of men assured him that never more would Goldsmith think of him in excusing his own slovenliness of attire. His train of reasoning was in a line with that of the person who felt that he could never be accused of lying because upon one occasion he had told the truth.'' The picture of Johnson, divested of all his rugged personality, entering the room at Wine Office Court and coming face to face with Goldsmith—the look upon Goldsmith's face—the dignity of Percy—the tavern servant, holding a napkin over his mouth while at the door, but guffawing and spluttering from stair to stair as he goes to carry up the supper—we can see it all before us to-day, and for a moment we cannot help being at one with the tavern waiter.

The curious part of the story is that it assumes that Goldsmith's slovenliness in dress was notorious. But the Goldsmith tradition leads one in exactly the opposite direction. The most prominent of his traits was always believed to be his passion for fine clothes. It was only to be expected that as his vanity—according to the "authorities"—was insatiable, he should endeavour to gratify it in this way; so that it comes upon us as a great shock to hear that he took so little pride in his personal appearance as to merit a startling rebuke from the most notoriously slovenly man associated with a profession that included but few beaux in any of its grades.

Now if the story was told of Goldsmith that, expecting a visit from Johnson, he got a new coat of brilliant colour, a powdered wig and silk hose, would not every one accept it as absolutely true to the Goldsmith tradition? There he was, puffed up with vanity and expecting to impress his distinguished visitor!'' And if Boswell was at hand, would he not give us a picture of Johnson's grave disapproval of the other's extravagance? And would not casual readers smile indulgently and say, "How like poor Goldsmith!" But the story being as it is, people say "How noble of Johnson to put himself to so much trouble in order to show a good example to the slovenly Goldsmith!" Though, looked at in an impartial spirit, it must be confessed that a more notorious example of bad taste than a prosperous man's going to pay a visit to a man

who was not so prosperous, and dressing up for the purpose in the most expensive way, could hardly be imagined.

Happily, however, Goldsmith had the largest sense of humour of any man of his time; and he would not feel as a good many others might, that his visitor was desirous of humiliating him by drawing his attention to the contrast in their dress. He had also a sense of politeness: he would have refrained from laughing so long as Johnson remained in his rooms; but when he had departed——

We do not hear that Johnson ever again tried his experiment of posing as an example of what could be accomplished by a man's giving a reasonable amount of attention to his toilet. But if in after years, when he noticed, as so many other people did, that Goldsmith was extravagantly fond of purple and fine linen, his conscience must have given him a twinge, and he must have bitterly repented leading Goldsmith into such ways. But he need not have been uneasy. If Goldsmith became addicted to the wearing of fine clothes, he did so in spite of, not on account of, Johnson's action. It was as a warning that he appeared before Goldsmith that night; and if Goldsmith did not refrain from running up a tailor's bill after that, it was because his taste for dress was too strong to be influenced by his recollection of Johnson as he appeared for the first time in his room in Wine Office Court.

With this visit of Johnson, accompanied by Percy, it may be said that a new period in Goldsmith's life began. That visit was equivalent to a presentation at Court. It gave him a position and a prestige which he had never previously enjoyed. It meant the recognition of his claims as a writer, not merely as a compiler. To be sure, he had not yet had his name upon the title-page of a book, and the public knew him not at all. That did not matter. He had received a proof of the appreciation of a man whose position in literature was acknowledged, and that meant promotion from the ranks of Grub Street, though possibly at this time he was not earning more than a few pounds a week. He allowed himself to be called Doctor—the distinction did not mean much. Kenrick enjoyed it and so did Griffiths, though the fact that the name of the University from which the latter had received his degree had never been

divulged, gave Smollett an occasional chance of saying a pithy word or two on the subject, of which he availed himself to the full. But no one questioned Goldsmith's right to the title, and this may be accepted as a proof that his contemporaries were better informed on this point than we are to-day. One may be sure that if Kenrick had become aware of any joint in his harness, he would have had his knife into it in a moment.

Goldsmith got on the most intimate terms with Johnson, and was admitted to the freedom of Tom Davies' back-parlour, where he came in contact with many persons of real literary distinction, and perhaps with an actor or two. Tom Davies had once been an actor himself, and he had been extremely successful in his connection with the stage, for it had enabled him to marry a very beautiful and attractive wife, and he had been fortunate enough to be satirised by Churchill in the lines in the *Rosciad:*

> Statesman all over, in place famous grown
> He mouths a sentence as curs mouth a bone;

and he retired from the boards, where he could never have gained further distinction, and opened a bookseller's shop, from behind the counter of which he was able to make friends with such customers as were aware of his stage associations and of the attractions of his wife. With such claims to attention, it is not surprising that his shop became a rendezvous of all sorts of interesting men, and that he himself advanced from being patronised as a bookseller to patronise the men whose books he sold (with varying degrees of success).

Johnson was one of the earliest of the *habitués* of Davies' shop, and pretty Mrs. Davies is believed to have provided him with as many cups of tea as would, if pooled, have been enough for him to swim in, or to provide him with his infrequent luxury of a bath. Tea was expensive in those days when it was bought by the quarter-ounce; but Tom Davies was a good man of business; he knew that Johnson loved to hear himself talk, and that a good many other people did so too, and the chance of seeing and hearing Johnson was a distinct "draw." Reynolds the painter, and Burney the musician, were constantly in the shop, though both were

busy men; and then came Murphy and George Colman, and Percy and George Steevens. Garrick, though extremely fond of good books and bad books in good bindings, at first gravitated naturally to the ex-actor's shop, but his attendance became more meagre when he found that his acting and his management were being made the subject of discussion in the shop as well as the back-parlour. This fact, however, did not prevent Tom Davies from becoming his biographer. Foote, the most notable *farceur* of the day, and the most popular because the coarsest, was also a frequenter of Davies' shop, and found there some material for his extravagant mimicry, but not so much as he hoped to find. He had seen Johnson and Goldsmith together, and, looking at them with an eye to business, perceived that he could make something out of them if he brought them on his stage. Undoubtedly he would have made people laugh by his mimicry of two persons whose peculiarities were so strongly marked as to make his task easy. But he changed his mind as to the suitability of at least one of them as a subject; for Tom Davies thought it well to make Johnson aware of Foote's intention, and Johnson forthwith asked the bookseller what was the market price of a stout oak cudgel. "Sixpence," he was told. "Why, then, sir, give me leave to send your servant to purchase me a shilling one," said Johnson. "I'll have a double quantity. I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity."

Now the fact that Foote had thought him (for a time) worthy of being bracketed with Johnson in a caricature, shows that Goldsmith was "in the picture," so to speak—that he was a prominent member of the Davies' circle and that he had become a familiar figure in the purlieus of Fleet Street—a person to be pointed out to a stranger as one of the notabilities of the region.

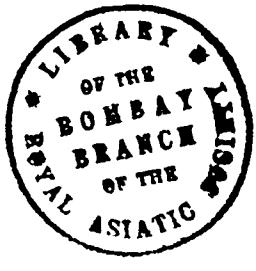
And this is the point at which a biographer, making inquiries for Oliver Goldsmith—Dr. Oliver Goldsmith, who had studied classics and got his degree at Dublin University; who had then studied medicine at Edinburgh University, chemistry at Leyden, and mankind in every part of Europe; Goldsmith who had more than held his own in oratorical contests in Italy; Goldsmith who had written essays in which

wit and humour were found in combination with a literary style unsurpassed for purity and elegance—finds himself face to face with quite a different person, the Oliver Goldsmith of James Boswell.

Goldsmith met Boswell at dinner at Tom Davies' in 1762. Boswell was a very young Scotsman, the son of a judge; and the Duke of Argyll having said that he should go to the bar instead of carrying out his own intention of becoming a soldier, he had been studying oratorical voice production on Sheridan's own system, under Sheridan himself, in Edinburgh, and his instructor had given him an introduction to Davies. Young Boswell had a craze for coming in contact with celebrated people, and for attending hangings, and having received in Edinburgh all the gratification in both directions—occasionally with a combination of the two—that the northern capital could afford, he came to London to continue his pursuit of these giddy pleasures. Tom Sheridan had fired his imagination by his account of Johnson, but Johnson having said something that was very hurtful to Sheridan's dignity, the latter could not consistently with his self-respect, which was considerable, give young Boswell a letter of introduction to the great man; but he knew young Boswell, and he knew that if he introduced him to Davies, young Boswell would be able to manage the rest without much assistance. He was right: the young Scotsman haunted the bookseller's shop when his numerous engagements at Tyburn allowed him, but for a long time he failed to run Johnson down, and having his heart set on Johnson, it was a poor equivalent for the treat he had promised himself, to meet Goldsmith. If there was one person for whom a Scotsman with an "accent" had an antipathy that no circumstances could mitigate, it was an Irishman with a brogue. And his overtaking Goldsmith when in search of Johnson was to him something like a man's following the spoor of a lion but being forced to content himself with a shot at a cat.

But, later, Boswell got very near indeed to the lion; and then he found that the lion and the cat had contracted an earlier friendship, and it occurred to him that as they were so close to each other he might as well bring the two down together.

Having referred with some conciseness in our Introductory chapter to Boswell's attempt to define the position of Goldsmith within the circle of which he made Johnson the centre, it is only necessary in this place to record that it was in the year 1762 that Boswell was presented to Goldsmith in Tom Davies' back-parlour.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CHAPTER XVII

AN INTERLUDE

1762

THERE is a matter which we think should be considered in all its bearings now that we have reached that point in the story of Goldsmith's life, when he had become of sufficient importance to attract the attention of distinguished men, and to be noticed and written about in connection with them and sometimes by them. The accounts of the earlier years of men who have attained distinction from comparatively humble beginnings are usually meagre, the fact being that such accounts are of no importance: there is seldom anything about the men to give their associates a premonition of their destiny; it is only when they have done something distinctive that people begin to notice them, and then they become just too closely attended to for their own comfort. It was only when Goldsmith got into line with noticeable people that he became noticed; and it was, as we have ventured to point out, rather unfortunate for him that he obtained the casual attention of the most earnest collector of minutiæ concerning interesting persons that existed in the century. Boswell was a parasite himself and he took a great interest in the ticks with which the great men whom he had a chance of observing were infected. He had not a soul above ticks, though he fancied he had, and that was where, we think, he made a mistake. It was, we repeat, Goldsmith's misfortune to come under the notice of a man who was the most active recorder of all that he observed, and at the same time the least capable of drawing a correct conclusion from his observations—that is, so far as Goldsmith was concerned. But quite apart from those questions of malice and wilful inaccuracy on Boswell's part, to which we have referred

in our Introductory chapter, there was about Goldsmith something which Boswell was constitutionally incapable of understanding, and which puzzled a good many of the people in the same circle of observers and recorders.

This peculiar quality which Goldsmith possessed, and which baffled many of the eminent men about him when they made an attempt to reconcile it with his possession of other qualities, causing him to remain to the day of death an enigma to all, was never reckoned a peculiarity on his part when in Ireland, because in his day, it was part and parcel of the nationality of the Irish. It was the exhibition of this national trait—it was scarcely a trait—that caused the Irish to be looked upon as simpletons, only when they were not looked on as utter fools.

There is nothing so difficult for one race to understand as the humour of another race, and the most perplexing of all forms of national humour were those which belonged to Ireland in the eighteenth century, and which are not yet extinct in many parts of the island. One of these was termed the Irish bull. It is a definite form of humour, and it is roared at in England, though not as a form of humour, but only as a ludicrous mistake on the part of a very simple person—something more than a mere paradox. Kindly Englishmen have often tried to explain, but never with notable success, to a stolid Irishman, how ridiculous is the blunder which he made when he had perpetrated one of these bulls. While the explanation is going on the Irishman stands with a perfectly expressionless face, but after a time, a puzzled look comes over him; he laughs boisterously, and forthwith puts a ridiculous construction upon the lucid explanation of his original blunder that is forced upon him. The man is hopeless—quite hopeless; and the Englishman, who goes away in a good humour, cannot for the life of him understand, when he comes to think over the whole business in the evening, how he was ever induced to pay that Irish simpleton the full price that he asked for the horse with all the blood of the Galtees in his veins, or for that terrier which is a lineal descendant of the favourite of Brian Boru—if the name is spelt *Bryan Boroihme* the Englishman is doubly impressed by the story of the pedigree. Looking at the spavined mare, and the wiry

mongrel, the rash purchaser wonders how on earth that fool of an Irishman was able to impose upon him.

That is how the Irishman found that his bull was a valuable national asset: it gave him the reputation of belonging to a nation of blunderers, which as a matter of fact was quite true: the Irish are a nation of blunderers, but not on account of their use of that figure of speech known as the bull. If a really observant Englishman had seen the twinkle that there was in the eye of the old Mayo peasant who, when cheering the ladies who had helped the neighbourhood in time of great distress, walked away muttering, "If it wasn't for the famine we'd all be starvin' this day," he would have known more about the true Irish bull than a whole treatise could teach him.

This is one form of Irish humour with which Goldsmith was fully acquainted, and he passed it off upon a good many Englishmen, and for his pains got the reputation of being a fool. "He was a fool," said Cooke. "If you gave him change for a bad shilling and you gave him the shilling back, he would say, 'What's the matter with the shilling? It's as good a shilling as ever was *born*.'"

Of course the people who came to understand this form of his native humour, found him extremely amusing and looked upon him as a delightful companion; but the majority of these people were not of the recording sort: they did not keep diaries, nor did they write biographies. But let not Boswell tell us that Goldsmith, if he was the ignorant, foolish, pushing, easily irritated conversational blunderer that he tries to make him out to be, would have become the beloved friend of people known to fashion as well as of people known to fame.

But there is still another form of Irish humour of which Goldsmith was a master. It consists in the delivery of an ironical comment so subtle as to mystify an audience, and, in the case of an average English audience, to leave them rather inclined to believe that it was meant in all seriousness to be an expression of the speaker's actual opinion on the subject of his comment. In Ireland this form of humour has survived the conditions under which it at one time flourished in almost every part of the island. It was once the commonest colloquial form of some districts, and even now it is possible for one to hear a dialogue begun and maintained in the same spirit of

quiet mockery, with no facial expression of either of the persons taking part in it to give away the secret.

So long as he remained in Ireland Goldsmith might have exercised himself in this fashion without running any chance of being misunderstood; and we may be pretty sure that when his uncle received that letter from Edinburgh which alluded to his constant visits to the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton, the whole of the Contarine circle had their laugh over it. But his constant practice of the same figure of speech in England had the effect not merely of mystifying many of his associates, but of actually leading them astray; and this fact, we think, must be accepted as an explanation of how, while some people thought him delightfully humourous, others believed, and recorded their belief, that he was a simpleton at the best and a fool at the worst.

There is no figure of rhetoric so dangerous to employ in England as that which the Greeks called irony. The occasions upon which an attempt to use it with effect has resulted in disaster, misunderstanding, and the breaking up of old friendships, are numerous. It is absolutely foreign—absolutely antagonistic to the spirit of the English as a race. Sometimes, when the one who uses it on a platform laughs in a knowing way, or gives a wink, or adopts some equally broad and square way of letting his audience into the secret, a few sentences in this vein have been known to be fairly successful; but on the whole, it is safer for any one making a move in this direction, when addressing an average English audience or an average English reader, to adopt the explanatory scheme of the American humourist who kept people straight by the note, "*N.B. This is sarcusm.*"

Had De Foe adopted such a course and added to "The Shortest way with the Dissenters," "*N.B. This is irony*," he would have been saved a great deal of trouble; and had Swift been equally confidential when he wrote his dreadful tract on the advisability of cooking Irish babies, and serving them up like sucking pigs, he would have saved some trouble to those sober Englishmen who wrote discountenancing any increase in the diet of the nation that would involve a return to the domestic policy of Herod the Great. Goldsmith's countryman Edmund Burke was also a master of the same Irish adap-

tation of the Greek figure of speech. He was misjudged on several occasions on account of his employment of it. It will be remembered that when he wrote his ironical *Vindication of Natural Society*, Johnson as well as Warburton and Chesterfield were deceived by it, taking it *au grand sérieux*, so that he was forced to explain in a preface to a new edition, that he meant the treatise as a jest. The English people do not like ambiguous forms of humour. Pope's *Dunciad* was only understood by reason of the breadth and the violence of its wit. But it is doubtful if much of the irony of the *Rape of the Lock* has been mastered by the average reader up to the present day. At any rate the general opinion that prevails among Englishmen is that there is no need for exotic forms of humour, when so excellent a result may be so easily achieved by any one with a moderately large mouth and with a horse-collar at hand.

That is how it was that Goldsmith was a puzzle to so many people in England, though in Ireland his humour must have been transparent. Had he written those *Retaliation* lines which referred to Cumberland, on one of his Irish friends, there would have been no chance of the irony they contained being accepted as it was by Cumberland himself as a finished compliment. Mrs. Thrale was, of course, a sufficiently penetrative reader to be able to see through the mask of the poet's irony; but assuredly if the captious Cumberland had done so, he would not have been so generous in his subsequent references to Goldsmith. During the thirty-five years that elapsed between the publication of the lines and his death the news had not reached Cumberland that they were not meant to be taken seriously.

But as the dangers of irony are so fully recognised and have been commented on so frequently between the time of Mrs. Piozzi and the time of Professor Minto, it is unnecessary to give any further instances of Goldsmith's suffering through his use of this rhetorical boomerang. We will only beg of a reader of Boswell to consider if it might not be possible that a Scotsman, who of all people in the world had the least faculty for appreciating this form of expression, became mystified by the adroitness of Goldsmith's employment of it; and if it was not rather more than possible that this Irishman, whose humour appears in almost every line that ever

came from his pen, thoroughly enjoying the mystification of Boswell, almost touched the border-line of extravagance in his utterances when the silly Scotsman was within hearing.

There are, however, several other forms in which the humours of the Irish character find expression, and some of them were also resorted to by Goldsmith when he was in the mood. He had lived for more than twenty years in Ireland and he was "to the manner born." They came as naturally to him as did the Irish customs of borrowing and lending when necessity arose—and a very slender excuse was considered adequate for either in Ireland—as naturally to him as did thriftlessness, in a country where, to make use of one of their idioms, only the thriftless had any chance of saving anything for themselves. The apparent paradox would have been only too well understood: the moment that a peasant was known to have a clean cabin and a "tidy bit of money put by," his rent was increased by one of the rapacious agents acting for a rapacious landlord, year by year, until the only chance the poor wretch had of living was to get a name for thriftlesness and to make his cabin unapproachable to "the quality" by surrounding it with a rampart of filth.

We get a hint now and again in the references to him made by some of his associates—not one of whom was quite so impervious to humour as Boswell—of his practising that peculiarly Hibernian form of humour which consists in making oneself the subject of a jest—in pretending that one is dull and incapable of seeing points that are apparent to all the rest of the world. No one can have lived in Ireland without observing how frequently and how successfully such a scheme of affected stupidity can be carried on by a humourist in a mixed company. It may be witnessed any day in the year. It usually starts with the deliverance of a platitude by a stranger. The humourist listens with simulated interest, looks puzzled, asks to have it repeated. When this is done there is a pause suggesting profound thought; then suddenly the clouds clear away and the humourist, abusing himself for being a dense fool, forthwith puts a ridiculous construction upon the simplest words. His chuckling is brought to a sudden stop by the amazed protest of the victim against his

attempted solution of the obvious; until, with a consummate simulation of stupidity and disappointment on the part of the humourist, the other is led to explain at length, and with ludicrous emphasis, the exact meaning of the platitude. But it is no use; his tormentor scratches his head, shakes it, wags it; he gives up puzzling over the problem; he says he supposes it would be plain enough to any one who had the learning; but may be these things had best not be meddled with by ignorant folk like himself; and after congratulating his victim upon the good use he has made of his opportunities of acquiring knowledge, he goes off, murmuring his admiration for the fine display of wisdom that comes so easy-like from them that have had the schooling.

Of course this kind of thing can only be successfully passed off on a stranger—an Englishman by preference, who never suspects the trick. An Englishman spends so much of his time endeavouring to appear cleverer than he really is, that he never thinks it possible that any one else should try to make out that he is more foolish than he really is.

Now it is notorious that Oliver Goldsmith was greatly given to every form of jesting—some of his jests Boswell grasped, after a pause for thought, and a word or two of elucidation, no doubt—and for such a man to refrain from ringing off all the changes of Irish humour with which he was acquainted, when he found himself in the presence of so many likely victims, would be too much to expect. Nearly all his associates took him seriously; Boswell most seriously of all. But, we repeat, now and again a hint is given that at least some of his most intimate friends saw through his schemes. They had an uneasy impression that there was more in his stupidity than met the eye. Sir Joshua Reynolds was his closest friend and Reynolds's capacity for seeing what was beneath the surface in the character of his many sitters, is generally believed to have been rather above than below the average. He affirmed more than once that Goldsmith was in the habit of diverting himself by affecting a stupidity that he really did not possess. Other acute observers agreed with him; but, of course, so fantastic a suggestion has been smiled aside by such writers as pronounce everything incredible which they themselves do not believe. If any of them had

put the question fairly, not necessarily to an Irishman, but to some one who had had experience of the various forms of humour of the country whence Goldsmith derived his brogue, his thriftlessness, his reckless beneficence, his appreciation of the weaknesses of his fellow men, his avoidance in conversation or in writing of every topic that might offend the sensitiveness of those with whom he came in contact—if the question were put to any one with experience of the Irish and their methods of thought and their ways of expressing themselves: "Have you ever heard of an Irishman affecting stupidity in the presence of stolid strangers for the sake of drawing them out, laughing in his sleeve all the time?" the reply might possibly have stimulated the imagination of the inquirers—not to the point of believing that Goldsmith had ever acted in this way, but only to the point of believing that there might be some excuse for Reynolds's suspicion.

But even if we were capable of performing the feat of making such critics admit that there was something in this startling theory of a typical Irishman's behaving in the manner of a typical Irishman when encircled by Englishmen, the "snap" of the girdle being a typical Scotsman, they could still save intact their view of Goldsmith by asserting that no man except one who was a fool would run the chance of behaving so that he should be taken for a fool. Such a contention would be quite right: Goldsmith was a fool to allow himself to be so carried away by his whimsical sense of humour as to cause him to play the part that he did upon occasions. We have no reason to concern ourselves with the question as to whether such forms of humour as those which have been practised by the Irish are reprehensible or not; we know the effect that their yielding to them had upon the Irish people, and we know that it is only since they have succeeded in abandoning them and choosing as their representatives men who are as serious-minded and as grave in their speech as the Englishmen or the Scotsmen with whom they mingle, that they have been taken seriously; what we have to concern ourselves with is the question as to whether he played the fool wilfully or because he could not help it. Censors will, of course, assure us that the culpability is on the part of the man who assumes a stupidity with which he has not been endowed by

nature; and taking that view of the matter, Goldsmith would certainly be deserving of censure, were it not that his error carried with it rather more than an adequate punishment. But this view assists materially in the solution of the most perplexing problem that has existed since people began to accept Boswell blindly and without taking the trouble to make the necessary allowance for his prejudices, his vanity, and his other disqualifications for coming to a just conclusion on many of the matters with which he dealt, the problem of how a man whose writings (which he invariably produced in a hurry) give evidence of quite an unusual range of reading, a far wider range than it may be said any of the writers in the *Spectator* enjoyed, should talk like a dunce; how a man whose writings overflow with wit should be accounted a dullard, and how a man who wrote the most sparkling comedies of his generation should be pronounced deficient in observation.

It is almost a platitude to say that a man's writings should never be looked on as reflecting himself—that the dullest of men have written the most brilliant of comedies, and that the most sparkling of conversers have been the most ponderous of writers. But when people try to impress upon us the extraordinary difference that may exist between a man and his writings, they invariably bring forward Goldsmith as evidence in favour of their contention. It is not so easy adding to the list of writers of comedy who were devoid of a sense of comedy in their daily life, though there may have been many instances of brilliant talkers who were the authors of very flat comedies.

And what are the instances given by Boswell and by Beattie, and occasionally by Cooke, of Goldsmith's vanity and of his envy springing from his vanity? There is the story, already referred to, of his being in a rage because the officers at Lille looked up in admiration at the window of the inn where the Miss Hornecks were seated, and there is the anecdote of his resenting the praise given to the performance of the puppets in Panton Street, when he could not contain his chagrin, but burst out with the protest, "Psha! I could do it as well myself!" There was the incident of his sneering at Burke's oratory and affirming that he could also do that as

well himself; but mounting a chair, he found that the words would not come.

We really feel ourselves to be in the place of the victim of that form of Irish humour which we have described: we feel, in setting about a defence of Goldsmith in regard to these charges, as if we were about to play into the hands of the humourist who, with a stolid face, requires an explanation of the obvious. But when we find Croker waving aside the Jessamy Bride's assurance that there was no doubt in the mind of any one present upon the occasion of Goldsmith's walking to and fro in agitation at Lille because the officers had paid attention to the ladies rather than to himself, that he was in jest; and when we find that Crabbe actually introduced the scene into a poem, treating Goldsmith's resentment seriously, we become aware of the fact which Goldsmith should have mastered as early as possible after arriving in England—namely, that there are people so utterly devoid of every sense of humour that it is never safe to deviate even by a hair's breadth from the straight and narrow path of seriousness, and that if one should try to protect oneself from a misunderstanding by the use of the warning "*N.B. This is Sarcusm*," one should print it in large capitals and in red ink.

It might have been thought that the least imaginative person—nay, Boswell himself—would be able to see the whole of that delightful little scene at the French inn—the impressed officers loitering about the square to obtain another look at the charming girls, the charming girls themselves overcome with laughter at that droll little friend of theirs, who was for ever making fun of his own plainness, stalking to and fro in a rage, declaring that the fellows had no taste, to look at the girls while he was at the other window, offering them the chance of their lives! And as for the story of the puppets, all that we can say is that if there is no humour in a man's affirming that he is quite as adroit as a stuffed figure controlled by wires, there is nothing humourous in the world. To allege that Goldsmith was envious of the praise given by one of the company to the puppet would be exactly the same as to suggest that he had declared that it was intolerable that so much respect should be paid to the Equator, or that people should take such an extraordinary amount of

pains to visit the North Pole when they could so easily come to see Oliver Goldsmith at his rooms in the Temple.

As for his sneer at Burke's oratory, the person who tells that story is the very person who told the story of Goldsmith's going so far in his praise of Burke's powers as to assert, in the face of Boswell's contention to the contrary, that they were superior to those of Johnson himself. And not only did he show his admiration for Burke's oratory in this way, but he published an eulogy of it. Was this the man who would venture to assert, when surrounded by Burke's friends and his own, that Burke was little better than a charlatan and that his art was a trick? Goldsmith was certainly not the man to do so, unless he had added to his sneer his offer to demonstrate the accuracy of his statement. But the moment he does so, we know that Goldsmith was just the man to say all that was attributed to him, and then to mount the chair, clear his throat, strike a pose of exaggerated dignity, and barely recover his balance on the rickety rostrum; clear his throat again, make more comic gestures, frown with dreadful severity at his friends who were laughing; give a cough, make another comic start and once again almost lose his balance; straighten himself, look offended, and when every one was roaring, jump down and pretend to be greatly hurt, and refuse to proceed further before so unmannerly a crew.

That would be the scene, and probably Burke himself would be present, and thoroughly enjoying the whimsical fun of his fellow countryman. It would carry his memory back to many a scene of precisely the same type enacted by one of the College boys in the Common Hall at Trinity while waiting for the coming of some of the dignitaries upon an occasion that called for oratory.

As for the story, solemnly told by Beattie, of Goldsmith's writhing in agony because some one read a scene from Shakespeare and then praised the author, we venture to suggest that it would be more to the point if we were told who was the reader. Goldsmith had a sensitive ear—by far the most sensitive of any poet of his century, and in certain circumstances, his writhing in agony is easily credible. But further we refuse to go. We will not even suggest that Beattie was actuated in telling the story by his knowledge of the contempt in which

he was held by Goldsmith, when Johnson, Reynolds, and indeed the whole of England, from the King up, were praising his triumph over Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire. Posterity has acted very inconsiderately in regard to Beattie. It has amply vindicated the judgment of Goldsmith respecting Reynolds's picture. Posterity looks at the portrait of Beattie and at the flying figures, and says, "Gibbon I know, and Hume I know, and Voltaire I know, but who is this?"

But we do not venture to say that Beattie told his stories out of malice; we only say that he told them because, to borrow one of Johnson's most effective criticisms, "the man was a fool."

We only claim for Goldsmith, before passing on to that part of the story of his life when his position in the world of letters attracted to him a good deal of attention, to be regarded as a man of genius whose memory has suffered, but whose position as the most lovable of men, remains unchanged, owing to his coming in contact with some persons who wrote about him without being in any way qualified to form a correct estimate of his nature or of his character. In order to understand Goldsmith the first essential is an acquaintance with the conditions under which he lived in the country of his birth, with the course of thought prevailing among the inhabitants, with the methods by which they endeavoured to express themselves, and, above all, with the varieties of their humour.

Is it possible to say that any of his associates who wrote about him possessed the least of these qualifications for coming to a correct conclusion on the subject of his character? We certainly think that it is not possible to do so. Oliver Goldsmith played the fool often enough in the course of his life, but not in the way attributed to him by these writers. There are fools and fools.

CHAPTER XVIII

SCHEMES AND DREAMS
1761—1763

To return to the annals of Goldsmith's career after a digression, which we believe to be as essential to the correct appreciation of the position to which he had attained as the Overture to *Tannhaüser* is to the understanding of the strenuous work which is to follow, it may be said that the record of his writings in the years 1761 and 1762 is meagre. When the last of the *Letters* appeared in the *Ledger* the payment which he received week by week—it amounted to a living wage, but no more—came to an end, and he must have found some journalistic work to supply its place; but only guesses have been made as to what were his contributions to the other papers. Newbery's books contain entries of a few guineas paid to him for a tract on the Cock Lane ghost—that childish fraud which succeeded amazingly until Johnson came upon the scene and helped to break up the squalid confederacy—but the search for this work has not been rewarded. Our opinion is that Newbery never did publish as a pamphlet what Goldsmith wrote on this topic, but that, with the author's consent (or without it) he handed it over to a newspaper. Goldsmith took no trouble over this. It is said that he revised a *History of Mecklenburgh*, and received for it twenty pounds, and that he compiled for Newbery a volume of poetical extracts. Then came some months of drudgery over an abridged *Plutarch* of which seven volumes only were issued.

While writing the fifth volume of this series, he was attacked by a complaint which from this date was a source of constant trouble to him, and he had asked for another writer to complete what he had begun. Going to Bath to recuperate

he found the pump-room in tears for the recent decease of the notorious M.C. known as Beau Nash; and he thought, or some one else thought for him, that he should take advantage of the opportunity to write a life of this exponent of the science of audacity in combination with impudence and backed up by unscrupulousness. The *Life of Nash* was done with taste and judgment. An indulgent smile pervades the work, as though the writer felt unwilling to hurt the susceptibilities of the feeble folk who had looked on Nash as a hero. He received but fourteen guineas for the two hundred and thirty-four pages which this book made, and his name did not appear on the title-page.

Later in the year he received two guineas from Newbery for seventy-nine leaves bringing up to date a school history which had been published before George II. had completed his reign. With the accession of the new monarch, it was found convenient to add to it the complete record of his illustrious predecessor. The chances are that Goldsmith's contribution to this work was worth the two guineas. To be sure it might have been possible for Newbery to get the "seventy-nine leaves" for less; but his desire to be generous got the better of his prudence as a business man.

But in spite of Newbery's munificence, and the increased interests of his life, when he was daily meeting desirable people, he had not yet reconciled himself to the thought of living as a literary drudge to the end. If Richardson was the nursery governess of the period, assuredly Newbery thought that Goldsmith would make an excellent charwoman. But he gave him employment, however humbly he paid him, and employment is healthy for the employed, and a source of wealth to the employer. Still, considering his circumstances, it is not surprising that Goldsmith should look about him with a view of discovering a path to a more ample life. He had just heard that Lord Bute was on the search for deserving literary men whom he could befriend, and it is said that he memorialised this powerful dispenser of patronage for an appointment to a department of Oriental research which had not yet been created and which up to the present has not been formed.

He had great hopes of Lord Bute. In the year 1755

Johnson had defined a patron as "a wretch who supports with insolence and is repaid with flattery," and a pension as "pay given to a state hireling for treason to this country." In 1762 he was asked if he would accept Lord Bute as his patron and become one of his pensioners to the extent of £300 a year, and he accepted the situation and the pension—from a "Whig dog" too. Of course the minister cared nothing for Johnson; but he cared a good deal for some of his Scotch friends, and had flung his bounty—at the expense of the nation—with a liberal hand among the hungry crew. His liberality to his own countrymen having called for some rather pointed comments in England, he hastened to endow somebody in England, so that the mouths of the people who were hooting him might be stopped. He heard that there was a worthy man named Johnson who had compiled a Dictionary, and he gave him a pension, so that he might be able to point to this Johnson as evidence of the eclectic character of the distribution of his rewards.

Johnson, who kept himself well abreast of public opinion at this time, and, indeed at all times, knew this perfectly well; but he accepted the patron and the position of pensioner. A little later when Tom Sheridan, who had taught the Bute family elocution in Edinburgh, also received a pension, though it was £100 short of the other, Johnson declared that if Sheridan got a pension it was time for him to give up his own. Well, he was the best person to pronounce an opinion on so delicate a matter, and perhaps he was right; but he refrained from carrying out his threat. All that came of his outburst of indignation was the severance of his and Sheridan's friendship. The ungenerous remark was accentuated by the fact that it was probably Sheridan himself who had suggested the name of Johnson for the pension. Of course the good-humoured Johnson roared with laughter when he heard of Sheridan's sensitiveness; and he was (apparently) equally amused when he heard—through the delicate tact of Boswell—that people were saying that he himself should have been the last man to accept a pension from the King.

"Why, sir," said he, with a hearty laugh, Boswell tells us, "it is a mighty foolish noise they make. I have accepted of a pension as a reward which has been thought due to my literary

merit; and now that I have this pension, I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been; I retain the same principles. It is true that I cannot now curse (smiling) the House of Hanover; nor would it be decent for me to drink King James's health in the wine that King George gives me money to pay for. But, sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover, and drinking King James's health are amply overbalanced by £300 a year."

That was the straightforward unaffected way of looking at the transaction; nothing had been changed by the incident of his accepting a pension: he that was righteous was righteous still; he that was filthy was filthy still. A patron remained the wretch and the pensioner remained the hireling.

Goldsmith having had an example of Lord Bute's "cuteness" which he took for benovolence, fancied that here, at last, after long waiting, was a statesman capable of taking a high-minded view of his responsibilities, and of exercising his privileges for the benefit of the State. His optimism actually led him so far as to think that a statesman could have at heart the prosperity of the State apart from the prosperity of his party! He learned the truth later, but in time to write the immortal words which have qualified the career of most politicians since the days of Burke, who "to party gave up was what meant for mankind."

Of course nothing came of his memorial. Bute no doubt burnt many candles, and he took care that they were kept upright in their sockets. He had plenty of rough material for the purpose; memorials poured in upon him. Mr. John Forster, in pursuing his indefatigable search for even the smallest item of interest in connection with Goldsmith, had all the old papers that had passed through Bute's hands searched for Goldsmith's memorial, but nothing of the sort was forthcoming. But Goldsmith had no thought of getting something for nothing from the dispensers of patronage. He had never a thought of a pension in his mind, and in this particular he seems to have been the solitary exception among literary men of the day. Pensions were rocketing in the air, and one might be brought down at any moment by a lucky shot. He never aimed at one. He had two splendid chances within a year or two. He was at Northumberland House where,

through the influence of his frend Dr. Percy, he had access to the library, and was actually addressed by the Earl who was going to Ireland as Viceroy. "Hearing that I was a native of that country," said Goldsmith telling the story to Hawkins, "he said he would be glad to do me any kindness." "And what did you answer to this gracious offer?" inquired Hawkins. "Why," said Goldsmith, "I could say nothing but that I had a brother there, a clergyman, that stood in need of help." "Thus," lamented Hawkins, "did this idiot in the affairs of the world trifle with his fortunes, and put back the hand that was held out to assist him."

His second chance approached him in the questionable shape of an emissary from the Government in the year 1767. The Government were on the look-out for men who could aid them by their pens, and the name of Oliver Goldsmith had been mentioned by a high authority in this connection. Once more "this idiot in the affairs of the world trifled with his fortunes and put back the hand that was held out to assist him." He flung open his door and ordered the tempter out, though he was chaplain to Lord Sandwich himself.

Happily, however, there was a more reasonable man, who was already a pensioner on the Government, and when the most tyrannical scheme of taxation that had never been framed was being pressed upon the American colonies, he did his best for his patrons in the pamphlet *Taxation no Tyranny*. Of course, Johnson being the most independent person that ever accepted a pension from the minister of a party which he alleged to be made up of traitors, believed in the principles which he advocated and justified in his pamphlet, or he would never have written it; so that no slight can be cast upon his honesty, but only upon his intelligence, on this account. He was independent; for is not an independence another name for a pension? But it seems rather a pity that he should ever have spoken as he did to Boswell regarding the abuse of power by a supreme authority. "Sir, there is this consideration, that if the abuse be enormous, Nature will rise up and claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt political system." At any rate, if some people will still say that Johnson pocketed his independence, the American colonies gained theirs.

Goldsmith's Asiasic scheme—or Asiatic dream—was long cherished by him. Curiously enough, it was in this very year that an author whose masterpiece rivalled even Goldsmith's novel in popularity, Bernadin de Saint Pierre, was trying to get some State to send him out to the East to found a new colony—a dream which was taken advantage of by some schemer, who, promising to land him at Madagascar, carried him on to Mauritius, where he planned his *Paul and Virginia.*

Goldsmith was more fortunate; but though he never left England, he retained his thirst for travel, and when he was shut out from the prospect of visiting strange peoples, all he could do was to interest himself in the strange peoples who visited him. The strangest of these were the three Cherokees who were lionised in England in 1762. He was greatly interested in them and brought them presents, receiving from them in exchange an ardent embrace which left a splash of their war-paint on his cheek, a token of goodwill which possibly was more convenient than the native ceremony of mingling their blood. It was convenient, but not conventional, and Goldsmith's appearance in the street after the ceremony was the subject of comment by the crowd. But he passed good-humouredly through the ordeal of yells and laughter.

His desire to travel had, however, taken too firm a hold on him to allow him to remain in Wine Office Court. He gathered his goods together and set off on a journey. He had set his heart on Central Asia; but he was obliged to be content with Central Islington. He was recommended to to this sylvan place of farms and paddocks stretching far to the north and west by Newbery, who lived there and had a worthy friend named Mrs. Fleming, a lodging-house keeper in need of a lodger. He settled down in her house, she having made a rather loose arrangement with Newbery to pay her bills for his board and lodging at the rate of £50 a year. These bills, as well as the extracts from Newbery's ledger, form very interesting reading. The latter suggest that the philanthropic bookseller had promised to pay the first of Goldsmith's many bills of Mr. Filby, the philanthropic tailor, at the appropriate sign of the "Harrow." On September 8, 1763, there is the

item "To Cash paid your draft to Wm. Filby £15 2s." From November 9, 1762 to October 10, 1763 Newbery had paid to Goldsmith in cash either direct or to Mrs. Fleming or Mr. Filby something like £110 14s. against which he was credited only with £63 "By copy of different kinds."

It is obvious that a system of expenditure under such conditions was bound to result in a financial crisis; but this was averted by the philanthropy of Newbery for another two years, and these years were among the most important in Goldsmith's life. His expenses were increasing, and his drudgery was not bringing him remuneration at the same ratio. He wrote prefaces and did revises and compiled reviews, but could not earn more than twenty-five shillings a week, although every one concerned in the production of literature was acquainted with him, and ready to acknowledge in every way except that which was remunerative, the value of his writings. He was constantly in the company of Johnson, and Hogarth as well as Reynolds became his most intimate friend. With the two last he had never more than a moment's disagreement, and beyond a doubt they were two of the greatest men of their time. The three—Goldsmith, Reynolds, and Hogarth—gravitated to the one point. They had something in common, though none of them might have been able to define it—something that has caused them to outlive in reputation so many of their fellow craftsmen—something that has caused their works to live after them and to be far more highly valued to-day than they were during their lifetime.

The *History of England in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son*—how the three friends must have laughed over the title page—was the only book of which Goldsmith was the sole author produced by him in these years, and it was, of course, published by Newbery without his name being attached to it. It went into edition after edition on the strength of its being what it pretended to be, even though the purchasing public, with boys and girls to educate, attributed it first to one profligate peer and then to another. Profligacy and polite literature seemed to have become associated beyond the power of ever being separated in the minds of earnest educationists. For more than thirty years the question of the authorship remained undecided; and the

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, P.R.A.

From a medallion in wax in the possession of the Author.

name of Lord Lyttleton actually appeared on the title-page of one of the pirated editions.

But in spite of the fact that he was nothing more than a hackwriter so far as the public were concerned, yet when Reynolds suggested to Johnson the starting of a Club which should be one of intellect and achievement only, Goldsmith took his place among the first members, who numbered only nine. Some fourteen years earlier Johnson had founded a club in Ivy Lane, which had gone to pieces owing to the death of some members and the dispersal of others, and he suggested—we know what one of Johnson's "suggestions" amounted to—that the new club should be on the same basis. The original members were Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Dr. Nugent (Burke's father-in-law), Topham Beauclerk, and that other gentleman about town, Bennet Langton, Chamier, the War Office Secretary, and Goldsmith. A retired solicitor named Hawkins (afterwards knighted) had been a member of the Ivy Lane Club, and so was looked on as qualified for the new one; and, later, for the same reason, Samuel Dyer was asked to join; he was a remarkable man and had many literary connections. There is a trifling conflict of evidence as to the reason for the exclusion of Garrick; but though Boswell endeavours to prove that the account of this transaction given by Mrs. Piozzi was a fabrication and that that given by Hawkins was an exaggeration, there really was no difference worth speaking of between his own story and the stories of the other narrators. He says that, "not very long after the institution of our club"—Boswell repeatedly calls it *our* club; though he was kept out of it for ten years and at last only admitted because Johnson made his admission a personal favour—"Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. 'I like it much, (said he) I think I shall be of you?' When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr. Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. 'He'll be of us, (said Johnson) how does he know we will permit him? The first Duke in England has no right to hold such language.' However," continues Boswell, "When Garrick was regularly proposed some time afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken a momentary offence to his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him and he was accordingly elected, was a most agreeable

member and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death. . . . I am happy to be enabled to vindicate at once the heart of Johnson and the social merit of Garrick."

This account of his he declares he gave in order to correct the prevarications of Mrs. Piozzi and Hawkins. A curious person this to correct prevarications! How about his own? He says that Johnson's offence was "momentary" and suggests that Garrick was elected almost immediately afterwards. Now will it be believed that Johnson's momentary resentment lasted nearly ten years? The greatest actor, a man who did more for the English stage than any one associated with it before or since, was excluded from the Club that had among its members two persons of no special achievements whatsoever—unless running away with the wife of a friend or marrying a countess is one—Beauclerk and Langton. It will strike a good many people that the less there is said about the heart of Johnson in connection with this transaction the better it will be for his memory. As for Boswell's affecting to patronise Garrick and to assure posterity that he could behave like a gentleman upon the occasion of his being present at "our club," this is a piece of impertinence that even Boswell himself has hardly paralleled in the record of his many feats in this direction. His repetition of "our club" is a delicious bit of presumption. Garrick had actually been a member before Boswell was grumblingly admitted, and even then the man who was responsible for his admission felt it to be his duty to lecture him before the other members, as to how they expected him to behave. Johnson knew that this caution was not unnecessary. And yet Boswell had the effrontery to assume that it was necessary for him to "vindicate . . . the social merit" of Garrick!

It was at the funeral of Garrick that the Club obtained its diploma; it was then alluded to as the Literary Club. That Goldsmith should have been one of the original members proves pretty plainly the esteem in which he was held by both Reynolds and Johnson. Edmund Burke was at this time no more widely known by name than Goldsmith; but Reynolds was seldom astray in regard to men. That was how he became famous. He foresaw that this second Irishman of their Club was on the threshold of a great career.

Within nine years—before Boswell succeeded in squeezing himself through the door that was only half opened for him—these two Irishmen had become famous; and every year that has passed since then has only added to the lustre of their names. Their nationality may have been an obstacle to their ascent, but it was not a material one. They both spoke with what is called in England a "brogue," but a very slight divergence from the incorrectness of colloquial London is sufficient to cause an Irishman's "brogue" to be alluded to. Only once or twice does a rhyme of Goldsmith suggest a "brogue,"—though in one of his early critical efforts he assumed that "key" rhymed with "say"—whereas in the works of Dryden, Pope, Addison and, indeed, almost every English poet, Irish rhymes are to be found by the score. But however this may be, both Burke and Goldsmith possessed sufficient national traits to cause them to be looked on as Irish types. Each of them was eminently a type of an Irishman whose abilities would be great enough to carry him on to the highest pinnacle of the Temple of Fame, were these abilities capable of being exercised independently of the control of certain impulses which do not tend to supreme success in life. But to be an Irishman is to be impulsive, and the impulsive man is the one who is nearly always right in his intentions, but nearly always at a disadvantage in dealing with a people who lose half the intermediate joys of life, but achieve supremacy, through their possession of the power to conceal their intentions and control their emotions.

But Burke and Goldsmith will ever remain in the estimation of the world which owes so much to both of them, as two of the greatest figures of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER XIX

"THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD" COMES ON THE SCENE
1763—1764

THESE years spent by Goldsmith in ill-paid drudgery while mingling on equal terms with men who were in easy circumstances—some of them were wealthy—form the most melancholy subject of review. The farm labourers on the Langton estate were better housed and better fed than was this man of education and genius, and so was the charwoman's son who cleaned out the studio of Reynolds; so, for that matter, was Dr. Johnson's negro who tried (unsuccessfully) to keep his rooms tidy. Here was this educated man of genius, with a learned profession at his back, a man who was capable of writing books that the world would cherish among the most prized of those possessions which it has received from genius—here he was compelled to scribble prefaces to worthless volumes, and to compile stuff which no one wanted to read, and all for the few shillings necessary to keep himself from starvation.

We have glimpses of him going from one lodging to another. He left Islington for a time and shared a room with the butler on the library staircase of the Temple, and thence for a short space of time to a room in Gray's Inn; and we find from Newbery's methodical papers that he was now permitted only to draw shillings in place of the guineas for which a few years before he had promised to account. Relations between himself and Newbery had not become actually strained, but they were certainly straining. He tried to get work from Tonson, who was becoming one of the great booksellers of the Strand, and he went so far as to sign an agreement for a *Chronological History of the Lives of Eminent Persons of Great Britain and Ireland*, which was to be in two volumes, each to contain thirty-

five sheets to be paid for at the rate of three guineas a sheet, the complete copy to be delivered within two years. But Dodsley, with whom the agreement was made, had stipulated that the author should receive one moiety of his remuneration only when he had supplied the copy for the last sheet. This clause was, of course, fatal to the enterprise, so far as the author was concerned. A glimpse which we catch of him at this time, previous to his return to Mrs. Fleming's at Islington, shows him exerting himself on behalf of Kit Smart, a sort of poet, who is best known to fame by reason of Johnson's confession that they had one trait in common. We have already referred to it. They had both an aversion to clean linen. The poet had married Newbery's step-daughter, and had undoubtedly gone "stark staring mad," as Gray, years before, had prophesied he should. But Goldsmith and Kit Smart also had something in common. Within a few months of each other, each had written the book for an oratorio. Smart's was actually produced with music by Worgan, a well-known musician, at the King's Theatre. Goldsmith got ten pounds for the rights in his from Dodsley, but only two songs that it contained were published until after the author's death.

So he was occupied all the time that he was running into debt to Filby for the clothes he wore when mingling with men to whom an extra coat meant nothing; and, according to Boswell, carrying on wordy arguments with Johnson, and getting much the better of him too, although Boswell did his best to prove the contrary. Of course we know perfectly well that Johnson was really a brilliant monologist: we have the evidence of the greatest men of his circle to this effect, as we have also to the effect that Goldsmith was slow, hesitating, and uncertain; but, as we have already said, if Boswell had contented himself with merely making a statement of these facts he would have effected his purpose, which he certainly failed to do when he trusted to his own judgment to provide excerpts from their conversation to prove the enormous superiority of Johnson. He never quoted Johnson saying anything so wittily apt as was Goldsmith's prediction of what a fable written by Johnson would be: "you would make all the little fishes talk like whales."

But beyond doubt Goldsmith must have been an agreeable companion at all times, and no one liked better to be in his company than Johnson. Still we venture to think that Johnson's influence was a very unhappy one upon Goldsmith. Since receiving his pension Johnson lived a life of complete indolence, not rising until late in the day and showing himself too lazy to make even a decent toilet before he sallied forth to play the part of dictator at a coffee house until it was time for him to play the part of monarch of a tavern circle. The effect of such an example of unbridled indolence upon a man of the strongest proclivities toward idleness, must have been very great and very demoralising. Johnson professed to be desirous of leading Goldsmith into better courses as regards personal habits; and he did so too—for a while—but surely it would have been more consistent with his lofty aims if, instead of putting on a clean shirt and a new wig to inflence Goldsmith upon the occasion of his first visit to Wine Office Court, he had shown him an example of industry a year or two later—an example of a man so devoted to his profession of letters as to continue to practise it with indefatigable zeal even though he was no longer dependent on it for a living. Surely Johnson must have seen that, for a man of Goldsmith's temperament, nothing could have been more demoralising than to be associated with that habitual tavern-spouting which practically constituted his daily life from the moment he got his pension.

But the time was coming when Johnson's sincere friendship for Goldsmith was put to the test and justified what the latter had said of his nature: "He has now become miserable and that insures the protection of Johnson." Goldsmith and he had been exerting themselves on behalf of Kit Smart early in 1764 and in April Mrs. Fleming received her old lodger back at Islington. It would seem that he paid her a retaining fee during his absence, for the first item in her midsummer bill is for rent from Christmas to March 29, amounting to £1. 17*s*. 6*d*. Now the bill up to November 8 had been paid to Mrs. Fleming by Newbery, but it would seem that the philanthropic bookseller suggested some new arrangement that would not necessitate his own guarantee to Mrs. Fleming; for, one morning—according to Boswell, afternoon

according to Mrs. Piozzi—Johnson received a letter from the lodger saying that he was in great distress, and begging him to come without delay. "I sent him a guinea," Johnson told Boswell, "and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

That is the bald account of the incident. It seems rather strange that at the time Johnson did not refer to the book as "his novel," but only "a novel." There can be no doubt that it was the *Vicar of Wakefield*, but according to Boswell, Johnson referred to it as if the book had never been heard of. This may have been, however, on account of his telling the story between the time of the incident and the publication of the novel.

At any rate here was the crisis, and it brought the man to meet it. But the odd thing is that, although Johnson and Goldsmith must have been together many times during the previous three months, not a word had the former breathed of his being engaged in writing a novel. Not a word about it had been uttered in the hearing of any of the members of the Club. A most extraordinary instance of reticence on the part of an author and of want of curiosity on the part of his friends, most of whom were supposed to be interested in literary work. The novel was sprung upon Johnson; but he does not seem to have shown any surprise. One might fancy that he would have held up his hands in astonishment, when this proof of the versatility of his friend was revealed to him, and that he would have held them still higher when the merit of this novel was revealed to him; and that he would afterwards have

talked to his friends about it, and that they would have congratulated the author, and continued to inquire about it—when it was to be published—what were the characters in it—what was it about—was the scene laid in England or Ireland, or had he placed it in Holland—the countless questions that are put to an author who is making a new and startling departure in his work. But we do not hear anything more about the novel until it was published fifteen months later. Nobody knew anything about it and nobody cared anything about it.

But there is another remarkable point in this connection, and this is the unemotional way in which Goldsmith received Johnson's announcement that he had sold the book and, moreover, brought him the purchase money in his hand. This is the most incredible part of the whole story—that Johnson should have made no allusion to Goldsmith's reception of the welcome news and the still more welcome money. Can any one believe that Johnson gave only such a bald outline of the transaction as Boswell printed? We, at any rate, decline to credit it. We decline to believe that Goldsmith, on suddenly, and at what must have seemed to him the lowest point touched by the ebb tide of his fortunes, becoming possessed of a larger sum of money than he had ever before had in his possession, and simultaneously being made aware of his power to write a book which—when properly negotiated—should be worth so much money, simply counted the cash, paid the bailiffs and began to rate his landlady for having so ill-used him. No, we may rest quite certain that Goldsmith was overwhelmed with emotion—that he confessed to Johnson that he had never before had so much money in his hand at one time, and that he believed the turning point in his fortunes had now come. We may be sure of this, and also that Johnson would be sufficiently moved by the expression of his gratitude and of his joy at being relieved as if by a miracle from the arrest, to touch upon this element in his narration of the transaction. If Johnson told the story at all he told it well and he told it fully. It was Boswell who reduced it to that absurdly bald outline which he printed as if it came directly from Johnson's lips; and his reason for doing so was to prevent his readers from thinking that Johnson concerned himself with Goldsmith's affairs in any but the most casual way, or that he was to any

extent interested in the man. He did not want his readers to be interested in Goldsmith, as he believed they would have been if he had made anything but the barest story out of the material at his disposal.

And then comes the most remarkable point of all in this connection: he does not record Johnson's having said a single word to him respecting the part that he, Johnson, had played in a transaction of precisely the same character—down to the very bottle of wine—some years earlier; only he had then appeared in the rôle of the arrested debtor and Samuel Richardson had played the part of the later Johnson.

This story was told by George Steevens in the *European Magazine*, and Croker printed it in a note in his edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Talking of Richardson, Johnson said, "I remember writing to him from a sponging house, and was so sure of my deliverance through his kindness and liberality, that before his reply was brought, I knew that I could afford to joke with the rsacal who had me in custody, and did so over a pint of adulterated wine, for which at that instant I had no money to pay."

The morality of the transaction of his making merry over a bottle of wine on the strength of another man's paying for it, was, Mr. Augustine Birrell remarks, "like his linen, a trifle dingy."

We wonder if Johnson did really omit to tell Boswell this story in connection with the other. We cannot believe that he would tell it to Steevens apropos of Richardson, and not even hint at it to Boswell, when telling him of the Goldsmith incident. Really, were it not for the fact that his account of the latter is corroborated in some measure by Hawkins and Mrs. Piozzi, we should be very much inclined to say, from his way of telling it—his omitting every detail of interest, and making Johnson talk in it of "a novel" instead of "the novel entitled *The Vicar of Wakefield*," that there never had been more than one story of a literary man being under arrest, and sending to his friend to help him out of his difficulty, meanwhile indulging in a bottle of wine.

But the scene undoubtedly took place, and it is one of the best remembered of all in the whole panorama illustrative of the romance of authorship. It has been treated pictorially

more than once, and at least once it has been put upon the stage. But so far as an actual record of the transaction is concerned, there is no trace of any in existence. Johnson enters, asks Goldsmith if he has anything to sell. Nothing, is the reply. What, nothing? Well, nothing except a novel at which he must have been working without a word to any one—without even approaching a publisher with a view to obtain an advance of ten pounds on it. The MS. is taken out of a drawer. Johnson reads some pages, is struck with their merit, hurries off with it to a bookseller, and hurries back with sixty pounds as the price of it. Goldsmith pays the bailiffs, pockets the balance, and rates his landlady. He seems to think no more of the novel, and the purchaser appears to share his forgetfulness, for he puts it into a drawer and there it lies for over a year, having apparently passed out of Johnson's memory as well. He may have been struck with its merit at first, but apparently the impression passed away, and we do not hear that he ever referred to it again previous to its publication, except to tell Boswell the story of its disposal. In spite of this, however, we do not think so poorly of Johnson as to believe that his interest in the novel ceased when he had put the money into the author's hand. We are convinced that he spoke of it constantly in the hearing of Boswell; but Boswell aimed only at writing the Life of Johnson; the Life of Goldsmith was outside his range of vision.

It seems very likely that Goldsmith at once got together his chattels and left Islington for London. As for his landlady, Mrs. Fleming, all that we hear of her afterwards is that Newbery left her £50 in his will, and that Hogarth painted her portrait; but whether as a commission from the lady herself or merely as memento for Goldsmith, it is difficult to say. As a matter of fact the picture may owe its name simply to the imagination of an auctioneer. It cannot be doubted that the portrait of an eighteenth century hard-faced woman in Sunday finery and with a determined hand resting on a table, appeals to people more when it is catalogued *Goldsmith's Landlady* than it would if simply marked *Portrait of a Lady*. She deserves a kindly word. Her lodger must have been a great trial to her at times, especially if he persisted in his

flute practice at unseasonable hours, and extinguished his candle at night by throwing a slipper at it.

He left Islington; and he took with him another manuscript. It was in verse, and it was entitled *The Traveller*. He had been writing at it intermittently for about nine years, but he had now finished it and he did not leave it behind him when he shook off the dust of Islington from his feet and went to his side of the attic in the Temple, which he shared with Mr. Jeffs, the butler.

CHAPTER XX.

"THE TRAVELLER"
1764—1765

THERE is no record of his having said anything to his friends about being engaged on a poem—a fact which is not particularly helpful to any one who is anxious to believe to the full Mr. Boswell's statements as to his vanity. He was regarded by most of the members of the Club as having ideas of his own about poetry, and he had now and again written about poems; but every one knows that it is one thing to have ideas about poetry and quite another to write poetry; it is one thing to write about poems and quite another to write a poem. Percy knew that he was greatly interested in ballads—the English woodland form of the stately formal French growth: an exotic even in France—and they had chatted together quite recently upon this subject. But no one guessed that he had actually ventured upon a serious effort in verse.

One of his friends suspected it, however, for on calling upon Goldsmith, Mr. Reynolds, the painter, found him with a pen in his hand and a sheet of manuscript with the ink still wet upon it. He had turned away from his desk for a moment to give some hints to his dog on the correct way of balancing a lump of sugar on his nose, when in the heraldic attitude *rampant*, which in a dog is called "begging." He had taught the dog to beg, and was now alternating his instruction with the writing of an immortal poem. Reynolds glanced over his shoulder and read the lines:

> By sports like these are all their cares beguiled:
> The sports of children satisfy the child.

He thought the couplet very appropriate to the situation, and said as much; but if he fancied he had a clue to the work

that had been engrossing the attention of his friend for some time, he failed to follow it up. Indeed, upon more than one occasion Goldsmith had confessed that he understood in the amplest way the relationship that the writing of poetry bore to the earning of daily bread.

But having finished the poem, he brought it to Newbery, who had the courage to purchase it. Then Johnson was let into the secret, and having read the proof-sheets, not only spoke very highly of the poem, but actually offered to improve it. The author, out of the exuberance of his humility, accepted his kind offer, and if Johnson did not quite keep his promise, he at any rate added some lines to it, and, the proofs being passed for the press, sat down and wrote a short notice of the poem for the *Critical Review*, which appeared simultaneously with the publication of *The Traveller; or, A Prospect of Society, a Poem by Oliver Goldsmith, M.B.*, on December 19, 1764. The price was one shilling and sixpence.

The second page of the booklet contained another example of what Hawkins called "this idiot in the affairs of the world," putting aside his chances of making his venture a success by a dedication to a person of position and influence; it bore a dedication "To the Reverend Henry Goldsmith," his brother, and this was actually of an apologetic character.

"I am sensible that the friendship between us can acquire no new force from the ceremonies of a Dedication; and perhaps it demands an excuse thus to prefix your name to my attempts, which you decline giving with your own. But as a part of this Poem was formerly written to you from Switzerland, the whole can now, with propriety, be only inscribed to you."

It is pleasant to have no reason to believe otherwise than that this dedication was received by the curate of Kilkenny West, Co. Longford, Ireland, in the spirit in which it was offered; and that he had no *arrière pensée* in accepting immortality in association with an "attempt" to which his name was prefixed.

The Traveller is not a poem which demands any detailed criticism at this time or in this place. It is a poem which is more full of poetry than of any other element. It is a poem

which one reads in a quarter of an hour and remembers for the rest of one's life. It is a poem that may be read without giving the most sensitive ear a single jar in any line from the beginning to the end. What might have been, and what we think it very likely it would be in the hands of a modern poet—a rhymed version of a lecture at a panorama—becomes under the touch of Goldsmith the panorama itself. It never, by phrase or by thought, falls for an instant below the level of high achievement. The only poem to be compared with it in English in this respect is Gray's *Elegy*. But while the *Elegy* is a monotone, *The Traveller* is a symphony; while the *Elegy* is a poem written by a man on a plain, *The Traveller* is a poem written by a man on a mountain. In the one the horizon is felt to be restricted; in the other it is felt to be wide. A comparison between the two poems is only possible by one's confining oneself to a consideration of the exquisite finish of both, and of the impression produced upon the mind by an admirable work of art. In neither is there observable the slip of the graver; but in the *Elegy* we are conscious in almost every line of the graver's work; in *The Traveller* we are conscious only of the effect which it achieves.

The Traveller is one of the few poems in which elaboration does not become laborious, and in which melody does not convey to a reader accustomed to feats in technique an impression of weakness. There are no feats of technique in any of its expressive lines; and the fact that such a conclusion must be come to is in itself evidence of the greatest technical feat of all, which indeed it is. A poem in which we are accustomed to have "fine lines" pointed out to us is usually one whose fineness of phrase is too apparent to be perfect. The best lines are those whose force is felt by a reader without the need to strike him a blow between the eyes. A great many of the most highly finished of modern poems have been called striking, but one might easily fancy that those analysts who call them so mean by the word little beyond a startling succession of percussions. Modern culture in rhythm does not mean a smooth road but one that is "bumpy" to a degree. This would not matter if the poet were mounted upon Pegasus in the air, but modern verse culture has clipped

the wings of Pegasus, and as he bumps along the highway the rider seems evermore to be calling out:

> Dosn't thou 'ear my 'earse's legs, as they canters awāy?
> Proputty, proputty, proputty—that's what I 'ears 'em saäy.

The bearing of all this upon the question of the technical qualities of *The Traveller* is, we trust, obvious. The artistic ideals of one century are not those of another; and the tendency of the last twenty-five years in poetry, as well as in music, has been to startle a listener into thought, not to lead a listener into a way of thinking, and certainly not to grant one the "pleasing of a lute." Therefore a poem such as this of Goldsmith's, which does not startle, may not appeal very powerfully to a student of modern English verse. But it does appeal to a much larger constituency—it could not well appeal to a smaller—and the grace of its diction and the limpid quality of its sentiment, quite apart from the real poetical powers of the whole, have caused it to find its way to the inmost life of more readers than almost any other poem of the same type has reached. It is like *The Deserted Village*, a poem for daily use—"for human nature's daily food." English-speaking people could not get on without the lines of *The Traveller*. Every day we hear of "a weary waste expanding to the skies"; the line has even been employed to describe the prolix speech of a statesman in aphelion. "My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee," has sent a thrill of joy to the receiver of many a lover's letter from abroad. To "learn the luxury of doing good" has won thousands for deserving charities when tacked on to the statistics of a "report" after a begging sermon.

> These little things are great to little man

has been applied indiscriminately to a variety of incidents of life, from children to domestic accounts. The thought that "Rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down" has, we are convinced, prevented many suicides. "The paste-board triumph" has done duty at many a general election, and "Winter lingering chills the lap of May" has no chance of being forgotten so long as the English language is spoken in the climate of England.

The effect produced by the publication of the poem—the first work of Goldsmith to which his name was attached—was not immediate, but its destiny was sure. It never remained dormant, though for some months Mr. Newbery must have had fears lest he had been too rash in producing a poem dedicated to an Irish curate, with a reference to his emoluments of "forty pounds a year" in the dedicatory letter. But then it began to be talked about, and the booklet began to move—it began to run off, and the first edition passed away in a rush. A second, third, and fourth edition were called for before August, and then it became known that a new poet was in existence. That is how the English people know that a new poet is born into the world: when they cannot, after trying hard, resist buying his poem, they form a great respect for him, and they measure his greatness by a scale of editions.

The Traveller succeeded on its merits only. Johnson frankly admitted that before its publication Goldsmith could barely get a listening even among his own friends; and when he learned how the poem was selling, he pronounced it the best that had appeared since the death of Pope. It seems a pity that he did not say this in the notice he wrote of it in the *Critical Review*. But to say so much was not really to go to any point of extravagant eulogy. The question that has not yet been decided to the satisfaction of everybody is whether Pope ever wrote a line of poetry in all his life; and all the rest of the "poets" were only imitators of Pope, just as he himself was an imitator of Dryden in all his ranges, from the Pastorals to the Ode, Pope's *Homer* doing duty for Dryden's *Virgil*. A great poet is like a great comet—he drags behind him innumerable meteorites, which, luckily, get fused before they can do any great harm. The heroic metre of the early part of the eighteenth century is the easiest of all metres to be dull in; and lacking the perfect balance—the rise and relapse from the first to the second line of the couplet preceding the semi-colon, which made Pope readable and admirable as well—his followers were unreadable and execrable. Churchill was the last of them. Byron called him "the comet of a season," but he was never a comet, he was only a meteorite—one of the "tail" of the great comet

Pope; he gave but a whiz, and all was over; he became fused, and he mixed with the mirk in dust and ashes. The other writers mounted the stilts on which Dryden and Pope had stalked along, but their progress was what Chamier suggested was meant by Goldsmith's "slow"—"tardiness of locomotion." Goldsmith had not the courage to forsake the heartless heroic metre, but he had the ability to make a new thing of it. The monotony of the measure seems always to have been accepted as "classical," and the introduction at rare intervals of the "needless Alexandrine" produced an effect like that of the momentary kick-up of a tardy horse when it gets a blow with a stick—a sudden spasmodic jog forward before it falls back into its normal pace. The sulky stanza of the conventional monody, employed by Dryden and Gray, and indeed a host of other writers of distinction, was far less monotonous than the continuous couplet form; but when Goldsmith set himself to the business of walking upon his feet instead of on stilts, he showed of what varied cadences even the heroic couplet was capable. Of course, he never played fast and loose with it, as Keats did nearly half a century later, transforming it utterly, and making it absolutely natural, and, incidentally, so outraging the upholders of the conventional that they stoned him with stones until he died. Goldsmith was not one of the great masters of the magic of melody, as Keats was, but he succeeded in both his poems in doing more to humanise the anæmic heroic metre than any writer of his century had accomplished. The glitter in the lines of *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* is the glitter of a limpid flowing brook, not of the huge mirror in which one seems to be looking when reading *Windsor Forest*. And that, we venture to think, represents something—certainly not all—of the difference between Goldsmith and, we will not say simply Pope, but the others: he drew directly from Nature; they held their mirrors up to Nature—not in the sense of Hamlet's advice—and noted the reflections on the surface. It was through the adoption of the mirror system that *Windsor Forest* became a shrubbery, with a rustic arch here and there, built up of poles sawn into lengths and nailed together according to scale; and that the "refulgent lamp of light" passage in Pope's English masterpiece of hybrid culture—

Homer in an English greenhouse—makes schoolboys who have ground through a book or two of Homer, grin.

It is interesting to learn that the manuscript of *The Traveller* was one mass of excisions, interlineations, and substitutions. The poet showed himself to be one of the most fastidious of writers. It took Gray three years to give an air of laborious perfection to his *Elegy*. It took Goldsmith eight to impart an air of spontaneity to *The Traveller*.

CHAPTER XXI

"EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY" AND SOMETHING ELSE
1765—1766

THAT Goldsmith should be capable of writing such a poem as *The Traveller* surprised a good many people, including several of his associates at the Club, some of whom were (as it seems to us) so short-sighted as to assume that Johnson had practically written the whole. We have already referred to the discussion as to the meaning of the last word of the first line —*slow*. Goldsmith's hesitation in replying to Chamier's foolish inquiry, and Johnson's promptitude in giving the correct meaning, may have induced the belief that the latter had the best of reasons for knowing better than Goldsmith what he meant. But Johnson would not hear of such a thing, and Reynolds, who did a little painting from Nature himself, never entertained the idea. He knew Goldsmith and he knew Johnson.

But Johnson really was, in spite of his denials, a collaborator with the author; he contributed nine lines to the poem. They are by no means the best that it contains; but they do not stand out conspicuously as being the worst. They are well grafted on to the parent stem.

Boswell was absent from London while the poem was being discussed; he was playing the fool on the Continent and he came home to play the fool, dressing himself up in the national costume of Corsica, that island of brigands—though the greatest of all had not yet been born there—to give himself a chance of getting into the room with Pitt, to whom he imparted the story of his life and from whom he begged the favour of a letter now and again. Of course, Boswell assumed that Johnson had written the poem from beginning to end; and it is plain that years had passed before he accepted Johnson's denial. He kept harping on this string at every

opportunity, and like the wolf in conversation with the lamb in the fable, he said in substance, "Though you may not have written it with your own hand, yet it never would have been written but for you."

"He imitates you, sir," he cried petulantly when Johnson was praising *The Traveller*. "Why no, sir," replied Johnson. "Jack Hawksworth is one of my imitators, but not Goldsmith. Goldy, sir, has great merit." This is not enough for his persecutor. "But, sir, he is much indebted to you for getting so high in the public estimation," said Boswell. "Why, sir," responded Johnson, "he has perhaps got sooner to it by his intimacy with me."

But as an advertising agent no one could surpass Johnson. He actually brought the poem to Reynolds's house and read it through to the painter's sister. She was a flighty person, a maiden of thirty-seven, who seems to have lived perpetually wondering what some of her brother's friends would do next. "Well," she exclaimed, when Johnson's own sonorous lines had, we may be sure, full justice done to them at the close, "Well, I never more shall think Dr. Goldsmith ugly." She had thought him ugly previously, though her brother, who has been the means of making us acquainted with more of the beauty of his century than have all the men of his time, and may have known something of its ugliness as well, did not agree with her.

Miss Reynolds's comment was a delightful one: it represents the fairy-tale transformation of the yellow dwarf into the handsome young prince. Such is one of the feats of the wizardry of poetry. More commonplace, but perhaps all the more scholarly, was Bennet Langton's criticism. "There is not a bad line in *The Traveller*—not one of Dryden's careless verses," he remarked four years after Goldsmith's death. Charles Fox was one of the earliest of its admirers, and Burke, although being whirled about in one of those miniature maelströms which were always stirring up mud from the profound depths of the seas of jobbery and corruption which went by the name of politics, had still time to read the first work to which his fellow countryman had put his name. Burke was on the eve of a triumph of his own, and when all England was applauding his first speeches in the House of Commons, all

the members of the Club joined with Goldsmith in congratulating him. "He has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his first appearance ever gained before. His speeches have filled the town with wonder," wrote Johnson to Langton.

The year 1765 was indeed a memorable one for the Club. Goldsmith and Burke had become famous, Boswell obtained his interview with the Prime Minister in the appropriate costume of a brigand, and Johnson had made his footing sure with the Thrales at Streatham and had had the degree of LL.D. conferred upon him, *honoris causa*, by the University which had given Goldsmith his B.A. But he never called himself anything but "Mr." to the day of his death. There were some movings also: Johnson had taken a house in Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, and Goldsmith had shifted to better rooms in the same part of the Temple where he had been for about a year, and Mr. Jeffs, the butler, had to look out for another companion.

The author of *The Traveller* considered himself justified also in hiring a man-servant, whose honesty he put to an unjustifiable test by leaving his money lying about his room. For obvious reasons, however, we are not led to think that the man deserved to be highly commended for resisting temptation in such a form.

The servant was probably hired at the suggestion of Reynolds, who advised Goldsmith to make one more attempt to obtain a practice as a physician; and a man-servant was as necessary an auxiliary to the carrying out of this scheme as were the purple silk small clothes, the scarlet roquelaire, buttoned close under the chin, the professional wig, and the gold-headed cane. He was now invariably referred to as Doctor Goldsmith, even in the booksellers' documents, and it had been impressed upon him that, with the assumption of professional dignity, he must give up any further attendance at those Bohemian haunts where he had been accustomed to enjoy himself. In the volume of Essays which he published this year—we have already quoted a part of the preface—he had been induced to make some changes which the booksellers thought needful in appealing to the five-shilling public from the threepenny. It was understood that the

book-buying public would be scandalised to come across any suggestion that the author had attended such plebeian resorts as White Conduit Gardens; so in the essay referring to this place, "the Park" was substituted. Other alterations of this sort were also made. But it was one thing for him to make such changes to suit the susceptibilities of readers, but quite another for him to relinquish all the joys of the vulgar places themselves. "In troth," he said to Cooke, complaining bitterly of having to give them up, "here am I shut out of several places where I used to play the fool very agreeably."

But he soon found out that locality has got very little to do with the delights of playing the fool. One may enjoy them in quite good society as well as in the humblest; and the way he set about playing the fool was in the way most dangerous for his reputation. He played the fool just too convincingly. His nationality had not changed with his prosperity; and so he continued giving grave imitations of Johnson's gait and manner, and people about him fancied that he was in earnest and not in jest; he continued leading people on to explain to him that some remark which he had made was absolutely silly, while he pretended that he could not for the life of him see the force of the explanation. He fancied that he was making fools of these people; and no doubt he had many a hearty laugh at the ease with which he had taken them in; and he would have laughed quite as heartily could he have seen them laying their heads together and declaring that of all the slow-minded idiots they had ever met he was the most eminent. Only a few of his associates saw what he was doing, and they have recorded their impression that he was diverting himself by trying how far he could go in enforcing his stupidity upon others. But their testimony to this effect goes for nothing when placed by the side of that of the people whom he had imposed upon. People prefer not to believe that they have been made fools of by the man whom they take for a fool; they would a great deal rather assume that any one else is the fool; and they are quite right. Goldsmith had only himself to blame for his employment of Irish idioms when living in London. Only there were some occasions when his friends had no excuse for allowing themselves to be taken in.

But there was one man who now sought his acquaintance and must have had many a long laugh at his tricks; for he had had some experience of his fellow-countrymen, the Irish, and their ways. This was Robert Nugent, who afterwards became Lord Clare. He belonged to a different type of Irishman from that among which Goldsmith must be classed. There was no subtlety about his humour, it was broad and jovial, and made up in heartiness for its want of point. He invited Goldsmith to visit him at one of his country seats. He had been married three times, and had done very well for himself by those transactions. His first wife had brought him a great deal of money, his second several estates, and his third had borne him a daughter. This daughter was not quite fourteen when she made the acquaintance of Goldsmith, and they soon got upon a jocular footing. The girl played practical jokes upon him, and he had a large store of fun to draw upon for her entertainment; and one may be sure that when he assumed his gravest manner and pretended, as it is said he did elsewhere, that he could not for the life of him make out why people at the table did not laugh when he had said that the peas should be sent to Hammersmith because that was the way to make them green, when they had roared at another man's saying the same thing, only making the merest difference in his answer, saying "That's the way to Turn'em green," the girl went into fits.

But never did Goldsmith so play the fool as when he set out to work up a practice as a physician. It is said that he actually worked it up to the extent of one patient, a lady belonging to the good old family of the Sidebothams. But though he might have worked up this illustrious connection to a highly remunerative point, he failed to do so, owing to the patient's having a favourite apothecary whom she insisted on calling in to consultation. In spite of the reputation as a poet which *The Traveller* had given him, he found that he was still at the bottom of the ladder as a medical practitioner; he declined to consult with the apothecary and the lady dismissed him.

It might have been worse—especially for the lady.

Topham Beauclerk was present when Goldsmith told the story of his treatment, and declared that he would never again give medical advice even to his best friends.

"Quite right, doctor," said Beauclerk. "Whenever you undertake to kill, let it only be your enemies."

The work which he was compiling for Newbery was entitled *A Survey of Experimental Philosophy*. Contrary to what one might suppose, it was not illustrative of his experience as a practitioner. He got sixty guineas out of it. It is impossible to say what other sums he earned to pay his extra expenses, though Newbery's explicit accounts tell us how much he borrowed. The chances are that Newbery kept him pretty busy after the success of the poem. That was where the system of advances benefited the bookseller. "For which I promise to account" appears pretty frequently over the signature of Goldsmith, and it may be taken for granted that so excellent a business man as Mr. Newbery the elder made him account for every penny, and got good value for his money. The system, which really was a negation of all system, naturally prevented the borrower from being able to make a bargain for anything. But then it may be said that if Goldsmith had not begun every year with a balance against him in Newbery's books, he would never have done any work. But would this have mattered so much, considering what sort of work he was compelled to do—his *Survey of Experimental Philosophy*, his *Selected Poems for Young Ladies*, and the like? We could quite easily resign ourselves to be without these if only we had in their stead a few more original poems and three or four novels. It is heart-breaking to think of what the man proved himself to be capable and then to read the list of the work which was put into his hands to do. Newbery's treatment of him may have been just and even generous, but to set him to do the work that he did was like putting Botticelli on to paint the outside of a gasometer.

It was when he was in the middle of his *Experimental Philosophy* that the younger Newbery, nephew to John, seemed suddenly to remember that he had paid sixty pounds for the manuscript of a novel which had lain in his desk for over a year. It would appear that the transaction had faded from Goldsmith's mind as well as from Johnson's, for we do not hear that the fact of Newbery's having the book "in hand" was ever mentioned between them. It might be thought that the author would be full of eagerness for the

publication of his first attempt at a novel, and that the eminent critic who had made himself aware of its merit and who had recommended it to the publisher, would retain sufficient interest in the book to make some inquiry respecting it. Both Johnson and Goldsmith were daily coming in contact with men—Percy, Cooke, Hawkins and others, leaving Boswell out of the question altogether—who would certainly have recorded any conversation that had reached them respecting Goldsmith's novel during the year that Newbery had it in his possession; but we do not hear that its name had ever been mentioned in their circle, or that Newbery's plans in regard to it had ever been alluded to. And this being so, the advertisement in the *St. James's Chronicle* that "In a few days will be published, in two volumes, twelves, price six shillings bound or five shillings sewed, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a tale, Supposed to be Written by Himself," cannot have attracted any particular attention.

We begin to have our doubts as to the business capacity of either of the Newberys, when we know of the book lying in the purchaser's desk for a full year, and then of the advertisement being printed without the name of the author being mentioned, although the publication of *The Traveller* the previous year had given him some reputation. Indeed there is much that is left to the imagination in regard to the production of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, especially as some account-books of Collins, of Salisbury, the printer of the novel, contain some entries which suggest that he was the part owner of the copyright.

At any rate the book was published on March 27, 1766, and a second edition was called for in May; a third followed within a short enough time to make its success apparent; but it would be impossible to say that it created the extraordinary impression upon the public that was produced by the publication of Fanny Burney's *Evelina* nine years afterwards. We know what Johnson thought of the latter book, thanks, not to Boswell, who really did not trouble himself much about literary matters—contenting himself, happily, with social amenities—but to Miss Burney herself, who not only kept an excellent diary, but also wrote long and interesting letters to her friends. The town went mad over *Evelina*,

as it has done now and again over a book which makes but a languid appeal to readers at a later date; and Johnson went mad with the town. But he certainly was quite sane over *The Vicar of Wakefield*. It is clear that he thought it an ordinary performance, in spite of the fact of his recommending it to Francis Newbery... But, for that matter, Goldsmith himself had no exalted opinion of its merits; for although he had plenty of time to revise it, he took no pains with it in this respect. When asked some time after its publication how he could have been so careless about it when he was not hurried in its production, he replied that no matter what extra trouble he might have taken with it, he would never have received more than had been originally paid for it. This shocking explanation proves pretty conclusively that the author regarded it with rather more indifference than he did his ordinary hack work. It was only when he set about printing a poem that he laboured day by day and year by year to bring it as near to perfection as was possible by a nice choice of words and the most exquisite finish in the matter of style. No one indeed seemed to think much of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and its prospects, for on the day the second edition was published, the elder Newbery, who undoubtedly had a share in the profits, refused to honour a bill for fifteen guineas drawn upon him by the author. Nobody except the general public appeared to think much of the performance at first, but after some editions had been sold out, it came to the ears of the critics that the book was a good one, and then the critics began to talk about it. A long time had elapsed, however, before Johnson said what he really thought of it, and then the most that Boswell could remember was in regard to its cash value. It was not cheap at £60, he thought, considering that Goldsmith had not at the time of its sale published his poem. To be sure, if he had retained it until *The Traveller* had made him famous, he might, Johnson thought, have got double the money for it. He may have shown good judgment in his appraisement; but at the same time it can scarcely be doubted that the Newberys—after the lapse of a year or two—came to the conclusion that they had got the book cheap, and we rather incline to the belief that most persons will be in cordial agreement with

them on this point. We seem to hear the elder Newbery—excellent business man that he was—talking over the rash purchase of his nephew at the moment, and enunciating the admirable business principle of the man in *Le Genre de Monsieur Poirrier*: "If you had only waited till his dinner-time you could have got it for half the price." Beyond a doubt, if Francis Newbery had only waited until the author had been carried off to a sponging-house, he could have got the book for half the price it actually cost him. Mr. Austin Dobson, in his delightful study of Goldsmith published in the "Notable Authors" series, gives a list of all the editions of *The Vicar of Wakefield* up to the date at which he wrote, and almost every year since then has brought another edition; so, taking everything into account, to say that £100,000 has been made by publishers and artists out of the book is not to go too far. Boswell's story about Goldsmith's having told him that he had once sold *a* novel—again not *the* novel—for £400, is too ridiculous to be credited even by the most ardent believers in the excellence of his memory. But what would he have said if Goldsmith had boasted to him that he had written a novel out of which £100,000 would eventually be made?

The Vicar of Wakefield, like *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, is a book which English-speaking people cannot do without. It enters into their daily life—in the Senate, at the Bar, in the pulpit, in the daily newspaper. Its characters have been used to illustrate innumerable incidents, and its incidents have been used to illustrate innumerable characters. Its phraseology is that of to-day, because every generation since the book appeared has quoted its phrases, so that now we can no more do without them than we could do without *Hamlet*. They have become part of the language of every-day life.

"Pray, sir, what is a Branghton?" cried Boswell when he wished to know whether Johnson meant to compliment him or otherwise—he rather fancied it was otherwise, but he was not quite sure. "Pray, sir, what is a Branghton?" and all the table at that collation at Streatham House roared with laughter—all except the little authoress of *Evelina*, who sat there blushing.

"Pray, sir, what is a Branghton?" one might inquire to-day at any middle-class collation, without causing so much

as a laugh. Who remembers anything to-day of the unpleasant Mr. Branghton of *Evelina?*

But if any one were to ask, "Pray, sir, who was Farmer Flamborough?" a reply would be quickly forthcoming from the youngest of the girls.

Evelina is still read, but only as *Clarissa Harlowe* is read, only as *Joseph Andrews* is read—not for entertainment but as a study in the literature of the eighteenth century. Average readers, when they have spent an hour over these, feel that it should be accounted to them for righteousness; and when they are told that people once went mad over *Evelina*, they feel—unless they are hypocrites who "austerely talk" of the beauty of eighteenth-century romances—that madness must have been in the family. But what about *The Vicar of Wakefield?* Is there any one who has not read it? Is there any one who does not continue to read it, not as a study, but for pure pleasure? It was accounted so interesting that the reading of it on Sunday was prohibited in the 'sixties in households where any book with the long *s* in the type was permitted, being presumably instructive and Sabbatically dull.

But if we want to know what the book really is, let us try to recollect what we thought of it when we first got it into our hands and read it through. How the spirit of the story took hold of us before we had finished the first page—how we puzzled over the Whistonian controversy, not understanding what was its drift, but still feeling that there was something quaint and "smileable" about it—how the catalogue of the cumulative misfortunes made us feel a good deal more sympathy for the family of Primrose than we ever did for the family of Job under similar conditions—how the new and more humble vicarage seemed a much more comfortable and cosy place than the old one could have been—how we fell in love with Olivia at first, and then with Sophia, when we perceived that Miss Livy had the bad taste to be attracted to a gentleman whose ideas of sport had led him to shoot a blackbird and a "sitter" at that—how our hearts turned again to her when it was revealed that her lover was really the heartless scoundrel that we fancied he was—how our hearts burned in indignation at the fiendish machinations of

the wicked squire in causing the arrest of the good old man—and how the story had been so interesting that we felt compelled by a sense of honour to take the bad with the good and shirked nothing of the sermon to the prisoners! Then the reaction from the depths of misery to the heights of happiness, and all with such delightful suddenness too, far more plausible than the tale of the return of Job's luck—and what a satisfactory finish—all except the French horn; we felt a grudge against that French horn, which threatened to redeem the vileness of the wretch who had not only brought misery upon the lovely heroine, but had shot a blackbird as well! How long did any of us hold out against the redeeming influence of that French horn? How many years had passed before we began to smile at it?

But what of the other humours of the story? Well, were they not all lost sight of under the influence of the story? Were we not too much delighted by the woodland to be able to pay any attention to the trees? Had we not a sense of the humours of the story as one has a sense of the odours of the woodland—odours of bluebells and meadowsweet and primroses—primroses everywhere, so that we had no wish to "peep and botanise," searching the undergrowth for everything that grew there? Was it not enough for us to feel that we were breathing the atmosphere of the story and so had no desire to separate the keen freshness of the humour from the gracious perfume of the pathos?

That is how to arrive at a just knowledge of the fascination in *The Vicar of Wakefield* which has made it beloved for a century and a half by readers of many races—German and French and Italian and Danish and Spanish, as well as English. Only by recalling our first impressions on reading it through can we understand its charm, and how the feeling that it is altogether good must remain with all who read it.

Of course, it is one of the most faulty of all the books that have become immortal. Very interesting indeed it is to look for faults in it. They do not need much searching for, or any particular skill at that form of delving, to discover. The "fable" is as old as the book of Job, and the "machinery" is as ancient as the Book of Genesis. The story hangs together upon a gross improbability, and the coincidences

are as numerous as they are cheap. The interruption of the action of the story by an account of the adventures of the eldest son is as inartistic as anything in the *Æneid* or *Paradise Lost*, and the characterisation is too typical to impart to a reader a sense of individuality—at least, by all the rules for measuring such a thing, it should be so, and if it is not so, this fact does not negative the accuracy of the criticism.

Very interesting indeed it is to make a catalogue of its surface blemishes and then to pursue the inquiry as to whether the story takes hold of a reader by reason of its possessing such faults or in spite of them. We rather incline to the belief that the novel has become beloved from pole to pole owing to the simplicity of its construction and the equal simplicity of its characters. We have the same feeling for them as we have for children. Looked at from the standpoint of worldly wisdom, the Vicar himself is the greatest child in the family. His smile is that of the child who has a great fancy for itself at times, and feels proud of its position as the head of the nursery. He looks on smilingly at the little games of the other children, the chief of whom is Mrs. Primrose, and he is very sly over the airs they give themselves—their foolish little tricks—their bedecking themselves out in cheap finery, decocting face-washes, and thinking to make an impression on their neighbours by riding to church on the horses that have been in the plough all the week. We hear him murmur :

The sports of children satisfy the child

in an artless aside, and he will not take them seriously. He chuckles over his own cleverness in spilling the face-wash—the cleverness of the nursery—and he is quite good-humoured in letting the others have their own way in the matter of the painting of the family group. He enters with spirit into the game—the usual children's game—of "dressing up" —and he dresses up with the best of them. So he goes on to the end; and it is the childlike spirit that prevails, bringing out the better nature of the criminals in the gaol, just as the presence of a little child has been known to change the character of a man—to purify a whole community of the lawless.

If *The Vicar of Wakefield* had been worked out with more

consideration for probability, it would never, we think, have reached the position that it now holds in the hearts of readers: it would have been criticised, not beloved.

The personal note sounds through this book. Goldsmith introduced his own experiences into many parts of it. Every writer worthy of the name must embody his own experience, or the result of his own observation, into his or her books; but few writers of fiction have gone so far in this way as Goldsmith. In his essays, his plays, and his one romance, we are conscious of coming in contact with Oliver Goldsmith in many places. The difficulty is always to know where imagination takes the pen from the hand of actuality to continue the story. A writer of fiction who is something of an artist will be conscientious in respect of his art rather than in respect of facts. He may have some one in his mind when he starts to draw a character necessary for the working out of the incidents of his story; but if he is an artist he will have no hesitation in adding imaginary traits to those with which the live model is endowed, in order to make him more interesting, and more lifelike as well, for he knows that, however transparent the character of a man may be, it has its opaque patches. A man invariably reserves something of himself—something of his character, something of his nature—from the eyes of the world; and thus it is left to the imagination of a painter, or that of a student of character who expresses himself through the medium of a novel, to present a picture that is really more true to nature than it would be if he had confined himself to the reproduction on the canvas or on the paper of the man as he usually appears before the world. The difference between a great painter and an ordinary draughtsman is that the latter reproduces the features as he sees them and as most people see them, the former reveals the character beneath those features.

To say that Dr. Primrose was the Reverend Charles Goldsmith would be to go too far; but how far it is impossible to tell. It seems pretty likely that Goldsmith had his father before him all the time that he was composing the story; but then what about the father of the "Man in Black," and what about the parson in *The Deserted Village*? These characters are also said to have been taken from Charles Goldsmith,

though they are far from being identical with Dr. Primrose. Dr. Primrose may have been childlike in his unworldliness, but he never suggested the unpractical beneficence of the father of the "Man in Black." The truth seems to us to be that Goldsmith put something of his father into every one of the three characters, but took good care to put no more into any one of them than suited his own purpose. And so also he dealt with himself in his works. There was something of himself in the "Man in Black," in the "philosophic vagabond" George Primrose, and in Mr. Honeywood. To no one of these characters are we justified in pointing, saying, as some people have not hesitated to say, "That is Oliver Goldsmith." Only one thing is certain: he never drew any character with photographic inaccuracy. The depicting of character is outside the province of the photographer. Goldsmith's portraits are the work of a man of imagination as well as observation.

Quite profitless it would be to pursue the question of how far his mother went to the character of Mrs. Primrose, and whether Olivia or Sophia was drawn from his cousin Jane Contarine; but it would be impossible to turn away from the book without referring to the passionate appeal for the reform of the penal laws, in that chapter where the good parson is shown incarcerated and endeavouring to do something for his fellow prisoners. The subject was one upon which Goldsmith had written earnestly before; and the arguments that he employed are precisely those which were used with effect when, many years after his death, the question of these reforms were agitating the country. But at the time Goldsmith wrote there was no statesman bold enough or wise enough to set about the task which he suggested. Indeed, public opinion was strongly opposed to any reduction in the severity of the Statutes relating to the protection of property. Gibbets were almost as plentifully distributed through England as telegraph-poles are in these days; and the Black Mondays at Newgate sent scores of wretches to Tyburn. As Walpole said in one of his letters, England had become one vast shambles; and yet Goldsmith's voice was the solitary one that was raised in protest against this shocking condition of things.

It seems strange that this serious chapter in *The Vicar of*

Wakefield did not call for comment from Johnson and his circle. Their neglect of it could not be attributed to any want of interest in the subject on the part of the active recorder to the group. Mr. Boswell knew more about the etiquette of Tyburn than any amateur in England, with the exception, perhaps, of George Selwyn. He attended executions pretty much as we attend races; but he never made a toil of a pleasure as Selwyn did, allowing nothing to interfere with his study of the dying agonies of the victims of a monstrous code, and retaining all the year round a special room in a house overlooking the Edinburgh Grass Market where the hangings took place. Mr. Selwyn was one of the most natural of the wits of the period, and was devoted to children.

But not a word do we hear of any comment being made by Goldsmith's friends upon that able chapter in his book, though we are not spared the most trivial discussion that took place upon some ridiculous question, such as whether Hume had ever confessed to "a clergyman in the bishopric of Durham" that he had never read the New Testament with attention, or "whether a peasant can possibly be so happy as a philosopher," so that the impression is forced upon us that the members of this brilliant circle were more given to things trivial than things serious. It may be, however, that Johnson was so overcome by the labour entailed by producing his edition of Shakespeare—he started his subscription list in 1756 and promised that subscribers should have the work complete by the end of the following year, and no doubt he meant to get the whole done by that time, so that Churchill was not justified in calling him a cheat—that he thought it prudent to relax for a while and approach nothing that demanded serious attention. He was, after all, barely nine years in arrears with his Shakespeare.

But Edmund Burke read the indictment of the penal code in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and it produced its impression upon him. If he was not able to appraise the market value of the novel so accurately as Johnson, he showed himself more capable of appreciating its ethical as well as its economic value.

It seems rather remarkable that a book which is so thoroughly English in its feeling and its homeliness, should become so popular all over the Continent. Translation followed

translation into French and German; Italian and Danish issues came later. One of the later Spanish editions was published in Mexico in 1852. It was received with acclamation in all countries and by some of the best-known men in Europe. Goethe has borne eloquent testimony to the effect it produced upon him, when as a student in Strasburg, it was read to him by Herder. To the end of his long career he affirmed that it had been the means of changing his ideals of life and of drawing him closer to the truest literary forms. Among the Garrick correspondence there is a lively letter from Madame Riccoboni relative to her many disappointments over the *Vicaire*, which had been promised to her by Burke but not sent; and then telling of the supreme disappointment she experienced when at last she got a copy. Garrick had told her that it was not the sort of book that she would care about, and she told him that his judgment was not at fault. She thought no more highly of it than did Garrick. That was only to be expected; but when it was translated into French it went into as many editions as the original did in the land of its birth. At his Coronation Charles X. found time to tell the Duke of Northumberland "that he had never known since the restoration of his family the pleasure he used to enjoy at Hartwell House in reading *The Vicar of Wakefield*."

This interesting story was vouched for by the writer of a review of Forster's *Life* in the *Morning Chronicle* of June 13, 1848.

The dramatic possibilities of the romance were most clearly shown by the production in 1878 of a rather free English adaptation by W. G. Wills at the Court Theatre, under the title of Olivia; but twenty three years earlier a French adaptation by MM. Eugene Nus and Tisserant was brought on the stage of the Paris Odéon, and played with great success, the part of "Primerose, Vicaire de Wakefield" being taken by Tisserant himself. Only to a few persons is it known that to the appearance of Miss Ellen Terry in Mr. Wills's play, and her exquisite impersonation of Olivia, is due the most interesting of stage associations of our time. At the termination of the run of the piece at the Court Theatre, Miss Ellen Terry joined Henry Irving at the Lyceum, of which he had just become the lessee.

CHAPTER XXII

IN THE MIDST OF FRIENDS
1766

The Vicar of Wakefield had scarcely given promise of the success which it was to achieve, before the ill-feeling of Kenrick was displayed in regard to its author. In a letter which he wrote to the *St. James's Chronicle* under the pseudonym "Detector," he wrote:

"SIR,

"In the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, published about two years ago, is a very beautiful little ballad called *A Friar of Orders Gray*. The ingenious author, Mr. Percy, supposes that the stanzas sung by Ophelia in the play of *Hamlet* were parts of some ballad well known in Shakespeare's time, and from those stanzas, with the addition of one or two of his own, to connect them, he has formed the above-mentioned ballad, the subject of which is: A lady comes to a convent to inquire for her lover, who has been driven there by her disdain. She is answered by a friar that he is dead.

> No, no, he is dead, gone to his death's bed,
> He never will come again.

The lady weeps and laments her cruelty. The friar endeavours to comfort her with morality and religion, but all in vain; she expresses the deepest grief and the most tender sentiment of love, till at last the friar discovers himself.

> And lo, beneath his gown of gray
> My own true love appears.

This catastrophe is very fine, and the whole joined with the greatest tenderness, has the greatest simplicity; yet though

this ballad was so recently published in the *Ancient Reliques*, Dr. Goldsmith has been hardy enough to publish a poem called *The Hermit* where the circumstances and catastrophe are exactly the same, only with this difference, that the natural simplicity and tenderness of the original are almost entirely lost in the languid smoothness and tedious paraphrase of the copy, which is as short of the merits of Mr. Percy's ballad as the insipidity of negus is to the genuine flavour of champagne."

This attempt to show Goldsmith in the character of a plagiarist was no more happy than the other efforts made to his detriment by the same contemptible person. The ballad beginning "Turn, gentle Hermit of the Dale" was published in *The Vicar of Wakefield;* it was the poem supposed to be repeated by Mr. Burchell as an example of simplicity of diction as contrasted with the overladen style of *Acis and Galatea;* but though this was its first appearance in public, it had been written some years before and printed by the Countess of Northumberland with the title-page, "*Edwin and Angelina*, a ballad; by Mr. Goldsmith. Printed for the amusement of the Countess of Northumberland."

Goldsmith's reply to the charge of stealing from Percy was not the indignant or sarcastic one which it might have been, considering how good an answer he had to the charge. It is, on the contrary, a model of good taste and moderation:

"SIR,

". . . Another correspondent of yours [he had begun the letter by an explanation referring to a book that he had commended] accuses me of having taken a ballad I published some time ago from the ingenious Mr. Percy. I do not think there is any great resemblance between the two pieces in question. If there be any, his ballad was taken from mine. I read it to Mr. Percy some years ago, and he, as we both considered these things as trifles at best, told me, with his usual good humour, the next time I saw him, that he had taken my plan to form the fragments of Shakespeare into a ballad of his own. He then read me his little cento, if I may so call it, and I highly approved it. Such petty anecdotes as these are scarcely worth printing; and were it not for the busy disposition of some of your correspondents, the public

should never have known that he owes me the hint of his ballad or that I am obliged to his friendship and learning for communications of a much more important nature.

"I am, Sir, Yours, &c.,

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH."

In the memoir of Goldsmith prefixed to the edition of his works for which Percy was responsible, it is explained that the source of the two ballads was in another ballad of ancient origin, beginning "Gentle Heardsman." The point is of little consequence. Goldsmith's poem has about it nothing whatever of an imitation of an old ballad, either in form or substance. It is too studied in its diction—too carefully put together—in short, it is too well written to be capable of carrying to a reader the "wood-notes wild" of one of the old ballads, even when the latter has undergone the process of "restoration" at the hands of Percy. It is a graceful eighteenth-century poem, and nothing but that. The gentle hermit is no more like the real "eremite" of an ancient ballad than is one of Boucher's shepherds like the real thing, and we feel that the "Dale" is one of Fragonard's, carefully built up, with a copy in stone of a Grecian altar in the foreground and the head of a leaden Artemis on a pedestal, half hidden by shrubs at one side. It is not even written in the form of the old ballad, but rhymes in alternate lines. This was, of course, in accordance with the fastidiousness of the author when writing verse. He could not bear to leave a tag-end, so to speak; but if he had meant to suggest the form of a *relique* he would certainly have done so. The simplicity of "Turn, gentle Hermit" is the simplicity of culture, not of the woodland; and this is possibly why it became one of the most popular poems in the language, and has remained so for a century and a half. We believe that more of its stanzas than of any other poem can be repeated by people in England to-day. *The Hermit* was set to music by James Hook, in the days preceding the introduction of the doggerel ballad on the concert platform.

And now that the novel had established the author's fame as a writer of fiction, just as the poem of the previous year had established his reputation as a poet, it might have been

expected that the booksellers would show that they understood their business by giving him a commission, with a handsome advance, for as many poems and as many novels as he could write for the next ten years. But what do we find? On the day that the second edition of *The Traveller* appeared, his draft for fifteen guineas on John Newbery was returned dishonoured, and a little later the author was glad to get an order to compile a selection of *Poems for Young Ladies, in three parts: Devotional, Moral, and Entertaining.* For this he received the sum of ten pounds. It was this book which he found a young girl reading at a house where he visited, and the incident so delighted him that he sent her a copy of *The Traveller* to encourage her. She lived to tell the story to Charles Lamb.

The booksellers were disappointing. They did not understand their business. They had suddenly become possessed of the services of a poet, and they sent him to search among the lumber of other men's works to paste up a book for them. They had at their disposal the services of a novelist of the highest order, and they commissioned him to write a grammar for children. It was like having a Derby winner in a paddock and harnessing him to a plough.

It is not surprising that he turned away from the booksellers to the theatre. If he had written a successful poem and a successful novel, why should he not write a successful comedy? He had always been interested in the theatre, and his earliest essays show that he had studied the stage in the most intelligent spirit; but he was not content to accept its traditions as though they were the decisions of a High Court from which there was no appeal. To the conventionalities of stagecraft he was never indulgent. He showed that he appreciated to the full the ludicrous operations of some of the drama's laws, and the ridiculous mannerisms of the actors. Several of his papers display an intimate knowledge of the trend of the art both in England and France, and all his criticisms are those of an ardent theatre-goer, but at the same time one who was fastidious beyond the average, and not inclined to be indulgent even to an actor-manager.

This last was where he was unfortunate. It will be remembered that in his *Enquiry* he had made some remarks

which David Garrick, who had taken upon himself the duties of residuary legatee of the English Drama, had interpreted as a personal slight, and had resented in a very practical way. But it was only through David Garrick that any one having ambitions to write for the stage could hope to get a hearing. Goldsmith was not a man to take back anything that he had written unless it contained some word that jarred upon his sensitive ear, or some phrase that failed to carry the exact shade of his meaning; but having had no intention of hurting Garrick's feelings or even his *amour-propre*, he took care to expunge the paragraph to which the actor took exception, since it had conveyed an impression other than he had meant to convey; and he did this, it must be remembered, after Garrick had declined to vote for his being appointed to the Society of Arts, and when he had certainly no intention whatever of writing for the stage. He did not call the actor's attention to his *amende*, and it is likely that he felt a little sore on account of Garrick's refusal to give him his vote.

But still, for several reasons, he had a longing to write a comedy; the first being, no doubt, that a successful play was much more remunerative to an author than a successful novel, and the second being that he had a genuine contempt for the spurious form of comedy introduced by Steele, which had done more to demoralise the English stage than all the immoralities of Congreve. "Sentimental comedy" had always been his aversion, as well as the aversion of the most intelligent class of playgoers; but what have the tastes of the intelligent to do with the manager of a playhouse? He does not cater for the intelligent, who are always in a minority, but for "the distracted multitude," whose shillings make him wealthy. One or two of these sentimental comedies had been successful, and had given Garrick a chance of displaying his amazing versatility; and so it came to be an understood thing that nothing but sentimental comedy had a chance of succeeding—with Garrick.

Goldsmith, it will thus be seen, had the worst chance that any man could have of reaching the ear of the public through the medium of a play. He was not on good terms with the one manager, and he was not disposed to write the class of piece which was in favour with the public at the

moment. But still he had a strong desire to make his attempt.

While he was compiling his poems for young ladies and such like stuff, he must have been working, consciously or unconsciously, upon his play, thinking out its characters and arranging their entrances and exits; and in the meanwhile he was mixing a good deal in society. He was very eclectic in his society tastes. He was constantly at the Reynoldses', and met there a number of interesting people and a large number who were not interesting. Then there was his friend Nugent, a fine, free and hearty, companionable man, who doubtless introduced him to many of his friends, not caring in the least whether they were likely to be congenial to him or not; he knew that to so human a man as Goldsmith all mankind is congenial. He had also Percy and the exalted circle at Northumberland House, and although Johnson had practically deserted the Club in favour of the Thrales', where he spent three or four days out of every week—only returning to try to effect a reconciliation between those of his household who had been quarrelling in his absence, and to see that they had a hot dinner—still the Club always meant literary society.

But it has been fully established that Goldsmith occasionally grew tired of literary society. This weakness he shared with a good many literary persons of distinction, and if the conversations of the literary society have been correctly reported by the person who took most interest in them, we do not blame the people who, like Goldsmith, looked elsewhere for entertainment. Johnson and Burke were amazingly fine talkers, no doubt, but they never seemed to be quite at their best when Mr. Boswell had his notebook out. Frankly, we confess that the records of the conversational feats of the literary circle tend to convey the impression that they were commonplace, trivial, and generally "rudderless." That word we have ventured to press into our service because we think that it conveys the impression that remains on the mind of an unprejudiced person after reading an account of the conversations reported by Boswell. And it is just because Boswell reports everything with scrupulous care—the appearance of the people, their movements, their peculiarities, and

their other human traits—that his book must be esteemed as one of the most vivid ever written. His reports of the trivialities and the inanities are infinitely more valuable than a verbatim record of all that Johnson said about the infidelity of Hume, or whether or not fighting was actually unscriptural. But the conversation was "rudderless." It went flying about the table like a ship without a rudder. Every current affected it. Sometimes it would go scudding along before the wind, and then it would suddenly sail very close to the wind indeed; round would swing the yards and off it would go on a new tack. It went at "everything by fits but nothing long"; it zigzagged over topics by the score, but it made no progress; it got no nearer to the heart of the matter. It was bewildering. It led nowhere. It was profitless.

So Hume thought it. What do we find him writing in regard to the social entertainment of literary London at the time? In one of his letters, quoted by Burton in his life of the historian, he says:

"If a man has the misfortune in London to attach himself to letters, even if he succeeds, I know not with whom he is to live, nor how he is to pass his time in a suitable society. The little company there that is worth conversing with are cold or unsociable or warmed only by faction and cabal; so that a man who plays no part in public affairs becomes altogether insignificant, and if he is not rich, becomes even contemptible."

This testimony from one of the most eminent of the literary men of the day is worthy of attention at any rate. Really, we do not think that the conversations, as reported by Boswell, differ so greatly in character from the gossip of the wheezy village gaffers round the ale-house fire. But to say so much is not to say that a report of the ale-house gossip at any period would not be intensely interesting to readers a century and a half later.

Even Tom Davies' shop must eventually have made Goldsmith ready for a change of intellectual diet; and when he grew tired of making fools of the chosen people in this connection, it is not surprising that he turned once more to the

Gentiles—the folk among whom he had, he confessed, so frequently played the fool agreeably. There were Clubs to which he had *entrée*, and of which the greater number were unquestionably as superior in entertainment to that available at the premises in Gerrard Street, where *the* Club met, as Bet Bouncer's well-defined charms were to the less pronounced attractions of Miss Neville; and among his friends here he was certain of enjoying himself. They did not talk like Johnson, nor was Boswell to be seen in a corner, but in spite of shortcomings under this heading, there was a good deal of ' n to be got one way or another out of the company, and Goldsmith undoubtedly got most that was going. There was the "Devil" tavern, celebrated by Ben Jonson, the "Bedford" in Covent Garden, and the "Globe" in Fleet Street. At every one of them his coming was welcomed and his departure delayed until the early hours of the morning. His associate, Cooke, to whom the world is indebted for a great deal of curious information about him in these days and in these localities, describes his popularity among his own countrymen who "supported" him at his evenings in one of the Clubs. So far as we can gather, the support of these Irishmen was not on their part with regard to him, but on his part with regard to them. During the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth Fleet Street and its purlieus were overrun by young Irishmen picking up a precarious living out of the odd jobs which journalism provided for the imaginative and the unscrupulous. To have no aptitude for any business seemed to be regarded as sufficient qualification for a journalist, and there was no chance of the supply falling short of the demand so long as money could be borrowed by a ne'er-do-well in Ireland to carry him to London. Some of them did moderately well for themselves, and some became notorious; but the majority lived on the precarious Irish system of begging and borrowing. They "stood by" each other, but not to the same extent as the Scotch "stood by" each other. The Scotch system was founded on the strictest commercial principles, and the Irish on the loosest principles of good nature. They "stood by" Oliver Goldsmith so long as he had a penny in his pocket, and it was their constant study to curtail this period. He understood the Irish system thoroughly, having practised it all his

life, and he never seems to have thought of questioning the ultimate consequences of its operation.

It is said that he had quite a number of these countrymen of his about him upon the occasion of his visiting one of their places of resort, and he was for years alluded to as "our Doctor." With some of the "Wednesday" Club, which met at the Globe Tavern, he became very intimate. One of these named Glover became rather well known through having been taken up by Garrick, as was also Hugh Kelly, originally apprenticed to a stay-maker in Dublin, and coming over to London to seek his fortune through the most devious of its avenues—Grub Street. On the death of Goldsmith it was only natural that every Irishman who had met him in the course of his jovial evenings should hasten to make "copy" of his reminiscences of those days, the result being the accumulation of Goldsmith anecdotes and the creation of a Goldsmith legend. The value of stories brought together from such dubious sources should have been properly estimated long ago and excluded from any serious memoir of the man around whom they were composed.

Quite apart from this range of anecdote is one told of Goldsmith by George Colman the younger. He was a child of five or six when Goldsmith was in the habit of visiting his father at Richmond. Taking the boy on his knee to amuse him, he received a smack on the face, and young George was consigned to the family dungeon to expiate the offence. He had not been there for long, however, before Goldsmith came to him with a lighted candle in his hand to comfort him in his well-merited incarceration, and remained with him for a long time, amusing him by doing those conjuring tricks which he had acquired for the benefit of his friends, the children. The most elementary of all nursery conjuring is probably the "Jack and Jill" feat, performed by sticking a piece of paper on the forefinger of each hand and showing the marvel of their sudden flight and unaccountable reappearance at the word of command. This miracle was shown by him to little Miss Hawkins, with many others recorded by her years after his death.

But the recreation which he enjoyed most at this time was one that never failed him—a country ramble. He was never

so happy as when he was strolling through the lanes of Hampstead or on the confines of Islington. All the rural villages which are now part of labouring London itself, and in some cases the busiest part as well, were well acquainted with him, and he endeavoured to inculcate his love for the country and fresh air upon some of his friends who had previously been thought confirmed townsfolk. He had done his best work in the country, and to the end he felt that when it was necessary for him to do his best he should be away from all that was convivial and in the midst of all that was congenial to him as a roamer and an observer of animated nature. He took a room in the turret of Canonbury House, Islington, and remained there for some weeks in 1767—quite long enough for him to assist in the establishment of a country Club at the Crown Tavern, in the Islington Lower Road. The preliminaries to such an undertaking were as simple as the formalities qualifying for membership. But all this time, whether in the town or the country, he was, as was said of another rambling genius, "throwing away his life in handfuls"—working at such trivial things as prefaces to new editions of worthless compilations, or at compiling things himself, getting a guinea at one time and five guineas at another, but making no attempt to regulate his expenditure in any proportion to his income, and borrowing with one hand in order to lend with the other, the willing victim of imposture and improvidence. "Throwing away his life in handfuls"—that is a just criticism of Goldsmith at the age of forty, as it would have been of Goldsmith at the age of twenty. He was no more fit than a child to look after himself, and there was no one at hand to look after him. He had inherited all those qualities which unfit a man for conflict with the world—qualities which lead a man into the delusion that life is a playing-meadow, not a battle-field—that if a man succeeds in making himself beloved he has attained success in life—that if he has pointed out to others the snares and the traps that lie in their walk through life, it is of no consequence if he himself walks into each in turn.

A man who has inherited such ideas, and has had them confirmed in him by the example and the teaching of an impractical father, requires more looking after than most men; but when such a man is a genius as well, all the looking

after in the world will not make him capable of holding his own in the face of a clamouring world. He will not hold his own for a day: he hands it all over to those who ask, and retains nothing for himself.

That is how it comes that people refer to Goldsmith with a shake of the head and a murmur of "Poor Goldsmith!" They cannot but think of him as a man who failed in life, because they feel that the man who does not hold his own, but gives it away with both hands, is a weak and not a strong man. A successful man is, in their estimation, one who holds his own in the face of all clamour, and everybody else's that he can lay his hands on.

That is how it comes that so many geniuses have not been "successes": they have given away all that they had to give, and they have not been thanked for the gift.

And that is how it comes that the world has not yet made up its mind whether some men were very great geniuses or very great fools. All that the world has made up its mind about is what is meant by success: success means accumulation, not distribution.

As for Goldsmith, he was a distributor—"he threw away his life in handfuls."

CHAPTER XXIII

A GLANCE AT THE STAGE
1767—1768

He was still thinking of his comedy, and working it out scene by scene, when he was playing in the countless comedies—some of them with more than a suggestion of grimness in their plot—of his daily life. If Garrick had understood the literary part of his business as well as he did the heroic or half as well as he did the commercial, he would have gone to the author of the *Vicar of Wakefield* and said to him: "Sit down and write a play for me on the foundation of your novel, and I will pay your debts and give you a pension of a pound a week for the rest of your life." The stage had, however, drifted so far away from real life that Garrick would have laughed at the notion of introducing into a play any but one scene in the novel, this scene being, of course, the old man's reception of the news of the flight of his daughter: we believe that Garrick was capable of seeing himself in the part of the Vicar for a splendid five minutes. At any rate, only a little imagination is sufficient to enable us to see him in that scene, and the imaginary picture of his treatment of it is stimulating.

But Garrick thought poorly of the story and still more poorly of the author, though it is likely that his opinion would have been somewhat less pronounced if the author had been more enthusiastic about him in his *Enquiry*. Goldsmith had made no advances toward him since its publication, and, as we have said, had not even pointed out his modification of the hurtful passage; and he did not now feel at all disposed to approach him to beg another favour even greater than that with which he had gone to the theatre

some years earlier. This was the position of matters when the comedy was finished.

It is nearly certain that he meant to offer the piece to Covent Garden, though Rich's successors in the management of that house had nothing of the spirit of Garrick; but Burke, when told of his intention, strongly advised him to do nothing of the sort, and Johnson pooh-poohed his fears that Garrick had not yet forgotten the indiscretion of the *Enquiry*. Reynolds, at least, was on the side of Drury Lane, and he arranged that the actor and the author should be brought together at his house in Leicester Fields with a view to business.

It could not be said that the meeting was altogether propitious. Garrick was a perfect glutton for flattery, and Goldsmith, always weak in worldly wisdom, could not put a reasonable price upon the abrogation of his principles, and humour the actor's weakness. Probably in his anxiety to maintain his independence, he ventured to assert it. However this may be, it is said that the *rapprochement* between the two was not all that his host looked for; but the manager agreed to read the play, and did so when he got the opportunity. But what was to be expected of him after the inauspicious opening of negotiations but hypercriticism? But he did no more than possibly every manager before and since has done on getting into his hands the initial dramatic effort of an author—he found fault with the characters, especially those that were sufficiently interesting to interfere with the interest of the character which he meant for himself. Several alterations he suggested; but on the whole he gave the author to understand that he could see no reason why he should not produce the play. He would not, however, give a decided answer about it, but seemed to take pleasure in keeping him in a condition of uncertainty, thinking himself entitled to do so, when he had advanced a small sum by way of a retaining fee. In this unsatisfactory state of things the season approached its close, and no arrangements had been made for the production of the piece. Later, Garrick's objections became more pronounced, and he suggested some drastic changes which the author declared he would never consent to make. Garrick then proposed submitting the whole

question of the play to the arbitration of Whitehead, the Poet-Laureate; but this suggestion called for such an outburst of indignation from the author, that Burke and Reynolds hastily interposed and endeavoured to smooth over what Goldsmith termed an insult.

In this unsatisfactory condition matters remained, when an incident took place which changed the whole aspect of theatrical affairs in London; for the management of Covent Garden was taken over by a syndicate (as it would be called to-day) of which the leader was George Colman. Strained relations had existed between him and Garrick ever since the production of *The Clandestine Marriage* of which they were joint authors, and Colman, having been left £6000 by his mother, thought that he would have a trial of management, for a while at any rate, and so had invested in the interest of Rich's successors.

Goldsmith immediately withdrew his play from Garrick, offered it to Colman, by whom it was accepted promptly, and apparently unconditionally; and so, with an extremely polite letter to Garrick, to which Garrick replied in a like strain, and a grateful one to Colman, the question that had troubled Goldsmith for months seemed settled.

He had not had sufficient experience of the vicissitudes of plays and the scheming of managers to be aware of the fact that the acceptance of a play means the beginning of an author's anxieties. The author's idea is that his work should be produced at the earliest possible moment; the manager's usually is that its production should be deferred as long as possible. Goldsmith's comedy had been read to Johnson and Burke; Reynolds was already acquainted with it. Johnson had pronounced it the best that had been written since *The Provoked Husband*, and promised to provide a prologue to it; and Burke had spoken enthusiastically about it. All this mattered nothing so long as Colman would not agree to allow the mistress of his partner in the theatre to be cast for Imogen. There was a dispute on this nice question of art between the two men, and they waxed so warm over it that such a subsidiary matter as Goldsmith and his comedy seemed to have been lost sight of altogether.

When a peace was patched up between the two and they

had a moment to spare, it was arranged that *The Good Natur'd Man* should be brought out before Christmas. But hitches always do occur—especially if they are arranged for beforehand—in the best-laid schemes of managers; and the author was informed that it would be impossible to do anything with it sooner than the end of the next month—January 1768. What the hitch was we have no means of knowing; but what we do know is that some weeks before the day announced for the production, Garrick hurried on and brought out a play of Kelly's entitled *False Delicacy* and insisted on its being regarded as a challenge to Goldsmith. Garrick was an excellent stage manager, but all his skill in stage matters was small in comparison with his engineering of something on the other side of the footlights. He contrived to set every one talking about Kelly in rivalry to Goldsmith, ridiculing the latter and affirming that he pinned his faith to Kelly. Garrick set all his machinery in motion—the pens of the scribblers who were in his pay, and the gossips of the coffee houses, to write up and talk up the uneducated stay-maker turned play-maker, so as to administer a snub to Johnson and Burke and the other members of the Club who had foretold great things for the work of their fellow member, Goldsmith.

There can be no doubt that the postponement of *The Good Natur'd Man* and the hastening on of *False Delicacy* were engineered by Garrick; and that for some consideration, the exact nature of which it is unnecessary to investigate, Colman showed himself ready to play into his hands. In spite of what Reynolds and the others had said to him, Goldsmith's original distrust of Garrick proved to have been well-founded. *False Delicacy* was produced, the house was packed with Garrick's friends, and the result was a great success. The piece was kept on for eight nights and repeated during the season more than twenty times. Ten thousand copies of the printed version were sold, and the publishers gave the author a public breakfast, and presented him with a piece of plate. It was translated into French, German, and Portuguese, and became one of the greatest successes of the day.

Let any one try to read *False Delicacy* now and its exact value as a work of art will soon become apparent. It has no

quality whatsoever to recommend it, and it embodies sufficient dulness to serve for a score of those inanities in dialogue which form the bulk of the eighteenth century stage. Garrick had lately professed to hold sentimental comedy in contempt —indeed, he proved by the part he took in *The Clandestine Marriage* that he desired to see the last of it; but his desire to see the last of sentimental comedy was not nearly so great as his desire to snub Johnson for having published his edition of Shakespeare without saying a word in praise of the services of David Garrick on behalf of Shakespeare, and to rebuke the other members of the Club who had declined to recognise his claim to be one of them.

As to the immediate success of his snub there can be no doubt. There was no one to charge him with inconsistency in writing up Kelly and giving him both a prologue and an epilogue, when he knew that *False Delicacy* was the most flagrant example of the sentimental school ever written, and every one believed that if Kelly was a success Goldsmith was bound to be a failure. If the play was not a failure it was not Garrick's fault, nor was it the fault of Colman, who had sold Goldsmith in order to make peace with Garrick. Upon the evening of its production, the theatre was crowded with the Kelly faction, who came prepared to damn *The Good Natur'd Man*, and they hissed it according to their instructions; but they could not make it a failure. The acting of Shuter in the part of Croaker so carried the house away that the element of detraction was overcome and the play was saved. It was, however, saved "so as by fire." It had a narrow escape, and everybody seemed to be well aware of this fact—the author best of all. He was grievously disappointed.

And he had a right to be disappointed. He had put some of his best work into the play, and he had looked forward to the profits of its production helping him out of his financial difficulties, which, as usual, were pressing upon him. The play had been ever present with him, as any one who had eyes could see. When Johnson was telling the awe-stricken circle how the King had exchanged half a dozen sentences with him a few weeks before the production, he stole away and sat mo[illegible]ily apart. That was his extraordinary envy

which would not permit of his listening any longer to the story of the honour that was done to Johnson by a King whose sovereignty, by the way, Johnson denied. "He assigned as a reason for his gloom and inattention that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered," wrote Boswell; "but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Dr. Johnson had lately enjoyed."

The distorted vision of Boswell, to which we have already referred in this connection, is doubly illustrated in his remark. His own mania for being in the presence of distinguished people caused him to look upon Johnson, fresh from an audience with the King, pretty much as the Israelites looked upon Moses on his descent from Mount Sinai; and he really must have believed that Goldsmith was envying Johnson "the singular honour," almost as much as did another member of the same company for whom Mr. Boswell was certainly better entitled to speak.

Of course, Boswell could not properly appreciate the feelings of a literary man engaged upon a work that demanded such constancy of thought and attention as a comedy of character with an intricate plot, the displacement of a single entrance or exit in which would mean the ruin of the whole structure. But Goldsmith knew all that he had gone through during the year, and when he felt that he had laboured and suffered to no purpose—nay, to the detriment of his hard-won reputation, he had reason to feel disappointed.

And he showed it in a way that seems to us to be as piteous as any incident in the whole range of the history of the making of our literature. He went off quite unconcernedly with his friends to the Club in Gerrard Street, and when there, became absolutely hilarious, singing his favourite song, not "Johnny Armstrong's Last Good-night," but that lyrical gem "There was an old woman tossed up in a blanket seventeen times as high as the moon"; and we have no doubt that his friends pulled themselves together and applauded him more generously than the Kelly gang had applauded anything in the comedy.

And then the friends stole away quietly to their beds.

All except one.

Goldsmith was left alone with the man who had done so much for him and who was still to do much more—the man who had taken very good care that the "singular honour" done to him by the King should not prevent his writing the promised prologue—he was left alone with the man who had suffered many disappointments in life, but had at all times risen above them; he was left alone with Johnson. The ghastly mask of merriment dropped from him, his head fell forward into his hands, and he burst into tears.

He told the story—but not the whole story—of this touching episode to Percy in Johnson's presence some time afterwards. The part that he omitted had to do with what Johnson said to him upon that occasion. But we can imagine all that came from Johnson, and be thankful that Boswell was not lurking behind the door to record all that seemed to him worth jotting down, which, we may take it for granted, would be just what no one wanted to hear.

"I was suffering horrid tortures," Goldsmith said, referring to his going to the Club with his friends, "and verily believe that if I had put a bit into my mouth, it would have strangled me on the spot, I was so excessively ill; but I made more noise than usual to cancel that, and so they never perceived my not eating nor, I believe, at all imagined to themselves the anguish of my heart. But when all were gone except Johnson here I burst out a-crying, and even swore by—that I would never write again."

"All which," said Johnson, hearing this confession, "I thought had been a secret between you and me; and I am sure I would not have said anything about it for the world."

Mrs. Piozzi seemed to think that Goldsmith had confessed something greatly to his discredit; but we do not think that many modern readers of the story will take the same view of the matter. They will, we fancy, feel more akin with Goldsmith on account of those tears of his alone with his friend, following the mockery of his hour of hilarity.

If Johnson had tried to comfort him by the assurance that things might not be so bad as they seemed, he would have been right. The comedy was not a failure; on the con-

trary, it is doubtful if any other play, with the exception of Kelly's, produced during the year, was such a financial success. Goldsmith made close upon £400 out of his fees at the theatre, and Griffin, the printer, was able to add £100 to this for the publishing rights. The author must have felt fully compensated for the anxieties of the year, culminating in that outburst on the night of the production.

The comedy would undoubtedly have been an unequivocal success but for the introduction of the scene with the bailiffs. It is difficult for us to understand in these days how so admirable a scene would have failed to be well received, unless the parts had been atrociously acted or the actors had introduced some atrocious "gags." (A paraphrase of this scene, only with infinitely more vulgarity in its fooling, made the fortune of a nondescript piece some twenty-five years ago in London.) Goldsmith was ordered to abandon the bailiffs, but he refused to do so, knowing that whether they were "low" or not, they were natural characters to appear in a comedy of manners, and he wanted to go to an excess of lowness to spite the spurious and affected sentimentalists; but he did not stick to his point in this play; he cut out the "low" element in *The Good Natur'd Man*, but took very good care to go to a deeper depth still in *She Stoops to Conquer*, and he triumphed. Meantime, however, his first effort for the stage had the "singular honour" done to it of a Royal Command, and Shuter, the comedian, who had certainly pulled the play out of the fire, chose it for his benefit when its run had ended. Goldsmith sent him ten guineas for a box.

The Good-Natur'd Man has never been a popular comedy. It has invariably dragged before a modern audience, ready to submit (now and again) to the elegant diction of the three—or is it four?—plays which have survived the leisurely drama of the eighteenth century. We do not recollect its having been attempted in any series of these revivals during the past twenty-five years in London; though a ridiculous medley of two or three French plays, with no breath of the eighteenth century in it, entitled *David Garrick* has been played thousands of times and accepted by unenquiring audiences during the past forty years as a picture of the period. The

fact is that, while there is a great deal to divert an audience in Goldsmith's first comedy, there is little to hold one's attention. Honeywood is said to have been due to his acquaintance with his own weaknesses; but it is rather curious that none of his friends seemed to notice this at the time. However this may be, Honeywood is a character too remote from the experience of most people to interest them; and the other young gentleman has not enough spirit for the two. Miss Richland has no "dash" about her; she is an elementary study done in water-cloour, and Olivia only differs in being done in pastel. They lack the Watteau grace and Fragonard glow of the two girls in *She Stoops to Conquer*. But when we come to consider the other personages we find ourselves on a different plane altogether. They are among the few characters in eighteenth-century comedy that are true to nature and effective stage figures as well. The stage demands a scene painter, not a miniaturist, and the limelight produces quite a different effect from that which is due to sunlight. That is how it comes that some of the most admirable characters in fiction fail to retain, when transferred to a play, the part which they took in the story. But with Croaker, Mrs. Croaker, Lofty, and Timothy Twitch, the garrulous bailiff, actors should be able to do anything on the stage, and yet they strike one as being quite natural. The doleful Croaker is said to have been suggested by a character in the *Rambler* whom Johnson called Suspirius; and Fanny Burney felt quite horrified to think that Goldsmith should have been guilty of such an act of plagiarism. We have become more lenient in these days toward writers for the stage, who annex some of the most strongly marked peculiarities of personages in fiction. But how about real life? Is Croaker so remote from the ordinary experiences of life in England as to make us feel that Goldsmith could never have met such a person, and so was compelled to take him bodily out of the *Rambler?* By calling his character Suspirius Johnson did his best to decorporise him—we have never met a Mr. Suspirius—and simply to present him as a type. He certainly did not invent the character. He is as old as the Prophet Jeremiah, or Micaiah, the son of Imlah, whose depressing influence was too much for King Ahab.

According to Boswell, Johnson said he believed that Croaker had been taken from his Suspirius; but he did not seem to lay great emphasis upon the theft; and we may be sure that no one regarded it as flagrant, or Kenrick or some of the Kelly gang would have made use of it against Goldsmith. As a matter of fact, there is only a general resemblance between the two characters, and it exists only in the matter of the grumbling; Croaker in the play is much more than an alarmist: he is an intriguer, he is a husband, he is a father. His disposition is shown in juxtaposition with every one of these relationships, whereas Suspirius is a mere sketch of an alarmist.

Garrick objected to Lofty, and the character does not seem to have been effective in the performance of the comedy. But this must have been wholly the fault of the representative of the character. Lofty, if played slowly and deliberately, would account for the dragging of the play—it accounted for its dragging when it was revived in the English provinces some thirty years ago; but if played briskly and with the bustle of a character in a farce, it should be one of the best parts in the play. The view of Lofty as a pompous fellow, full of a sense of his own importance, is quite plausible to a reader of the piece, but quite fatal to the balance of the play as represented on the stage. Woodward played the part; but we fancy that if it had been given to Quick, who was afterwards the original Tony Lumpkin, it would have gone much better, though it is not a low comedy part. Garrick had always distrusted the character, and some years later, reminded Goldsmith of the fact that, even when represented by a better actor than Woodward, it had not gone well.

Mrs. Croaker is a delightful character, not only as a set-off to her gloomily garrulous spouse, but on account of her cheerful naturalness; and the bailiff should have been as effective in his own way as Dogberry was in his. Goldsmith's instincts were rarely at fault; and we feel that the play without Timothy Twitch would be like *She Stoops to Conquer* without Diggory.

With regard then to the production of *The Good-Natur'd Man* what can be said is that it fell little short of being a great success, and that it only did so through the machina-

tions of Garrick, out of his pique against the Club and the undeserved slight cast upon him by Johnson, in regard to the omission of his name, both from the membership of the Club and his edition of Shakespeare. If Goldsmith's comedy had been produced before Kelly's and in the ordinary way of business, without the attempt being made to force down the throats of playgoers that it was meant as a menace to a form of entertainment which was then very popular, it would have been a complete success. Johnson's prologue was, however, a heavy weight to lay upon the piece at its outstart; it is ponderous, especially in its attempt at humour. It is a mistake to sneer at the pit in a prologue, or to talk of "the pert apprentice" when in the presence and at the mercy of some hundreds of this very class. In spite of everything, however, the value of the comedy was recognised on every hand. It would never have sold to the extent it did had it been the failure which it seemed to be to the author and his friends. It is satisfactory to know, too, that Goldsmith's earnestness in maintaining the artistic value of the bailiffs' scene was shared by some other excellent judges of stage effect. Five years later Mrs. Green chose *The Good Natur'd Man* for her benefit, and announced that this scene would be restored. Upon the same occasion Lee Lewes played the part of Lofty. This performance represented the triumph of Goldsmith's views respecting the introduction of "low" character into a comedy. He had abated nothing of his belief in this respect, and, we repeat, had even descended to deeper depths of vulgarity than were represented by Timothy Twitch; for "little Aminadab" in *The Three Pigeons* certainly moved in a lower circle than did Mr. Twitch. The triumph of *She Stoops to Conquer* gave Mrs. Green courage to announce as an attraction of *The Good-Natur'd Man*, the resuscitation of the bailiffs.

CHAPTER XXIV

ROOMS IN BRICK COURT

1768

GOLDSMITH with £500 in his hand all at once appears before us as a scarcely recognisable figure. He does not remain long so. He soon reveals his identity. What is a man to do who has had a constant struggle to obtain the necessaries of life and who has learnt by hard experience how precarious are the pecuniary rewards of genius, when he suddenly becomes possessed of more than eight times the largest sum that he has ever had at one time? That was the question which he must have asked himself with his £500 in his pocket.

His ingenuity was quite equal to the working out of an answer. Manifestly the only thing that could possibly be done with the money was to buy the lease of a set of chambers in the best part of the Temple and furnish them in proper style.

He spent the whole of the money in this way within a few weeks of receiving it. Brick Court was the situation which he chose. He was fortunate enough (he thought) to be able to purchase the lease for £400, and he was certain that, with due extravagance, he could lay out his remaining £100 on furniture. He did not over-estimate his powers in this way. In a day or two he was his old self, the Oliver Goldsmith whom everybody knew—a penniless genius, only instead of being lodged near the roof in Green Arbour Court —instead of being lodged on the staircase, jointly with Jeffs the butler, in Garden Court, where he could live as modestly as was consistent with his income, he has an expensive suite, admirably furnished and extremely well adapted for the exercise of hospitality.

He saw the advantages of his new place of abode, and he

seems to have made up his mind to avail himself of them without delay. This was the year 1768, and it was perhaps the pleasantest of his life, for the greatest happiness that he knew consisted in entertaining his friends. He gave dinner parties and supper parties by the score. Sir Joshua Reynolds —he was knighted by the King this year—dined with him twice in one week; Colman came, and so did Johnson, when he wished for a change from the cuisine of Streatham; so did Cooke and Bickerstaff and Percy, and quite a number of nonentities with appetites. While they lasted these entertainments were not wanting in merriment. A young barrister named Blackmore was engaged in writing certain *Commentaries* which afterwards became as well known in certain circles as *The Vicar of Wakefield*—perhaps even better known. He commented on the noise made by the guests of the occupant of the room immediately above the one in which he worked until late at night; and found ample reason for the tumult when he learned that Dr. Goldsmith was among his friends overhead. Entertainments went on without ceasing; and when Dr. Goldsmith was not playing the fool very agreeably, according to the advice given by Hamlet to Polonius, in his own house, he was doing so at the houses of his friends. He was as boisterous as a boy upon these occasions, ringing all the changes upon his native humour—singing his songs and dancing his dances. He had now got into the full glare of the footlights; his name was on everyone's lips, and the Goldsmith tradition became fully established. A little later everybody that had passed within a mile of the Temple during this year had a story to tell of the frolics of the ridiculous Irish poet. Every one was on terms of the utmost familiarity with him, but the way he taught some of them to keep their place is related by the glib Mr. Glover and the constant Mr. Cooke. Both of these gentlemen made the most of their friendship with him, and it can scarcely be doubted that whenever he had money it was placed at their disposal. One of them acknowledged having asked him for the loan of a guinea; but this was upon a normal day, when Goldsmith was out of funds. All that he could do was to borrow the required amount and slip it under the door at night so that he—or some one else

—might get it on opening the door. To the memory—or imagination—of Glover another story is due. It related to the Wednesday Club and a certain pork butcher who sang a good song. This accomplishment he thought entitled him to call Goldsmith by the most abbreviated form of his Christian name. "Come, Noll, here's my service to you, old boy," he would say between his songs. But one night Glover whispered to Goldsmith that he should not permit the man to take such a liberty. "Let him alone, and you'll see how civilly I'll let him down," replied Goldsmith; and at the conclusion of the next song, looked toward the offensive man, saying, "Mr. B—, I have the honour of drinking your good health." "Thank'e, thank'e, Noll," replied Mr. B— with great alertness. "Well, where's the advantage of your reproof?" inquired Glover. "In troth," answered Goldsmith, with a comical expression of chagrin, "In troth, I give it up; I ought to have known before now, that there is no putting a pig in the right way."

Glover was fond of playing practical jokes. It was he who, returning from a country walk with Goldsmith, brought him into a house where a family were having tea, and by brazenly pretending to be acquainted with some member, was invited with his friend to join the circle. Upon another occasion he, with some of the jocular young bloods who assembled at the Globe tavern, pretended that the chops to which Goldsmith was sitting down after a long and hungry day were not fit to eat. One of them declared that the waiter who had the effrontery to set them before an honoured guest should be made to eat them himself. The trick took. The company insisted on the waiter's finishing off the chops, and Goldsmith ordered a fresh supper for himself "and treated the waiter to a dram, who might otherwise get sick from so nauseating a meal."

The Goldsmith tradition was now fully established; and, just as twenty-five or thirty years later, every story of the adroitness of a man in avoiding the bailiffs, was attached to the younger Sheridan, so every story of the taking in of a man who was as easy to take in as a child, had Goldsmith for the victim.

It was when Goldsmith was entertaining two of his

most honoured friends at his rooms that there entered upon him without ceremony one evening a disreputable fellow to whom he had once lent a couple of guineas. "Sitting himself down, with most intolerable assurance, he inquired after my health and literary pursuits," said Goldsmith, telling the story, "as if we were upon the most friendly footing. I was at first so much ashamed of ever having known such a fellow that I stifled my resentment and drew him into a conversation on such topics as I knew he could talk upon, in which, to do him justice, he acquitted himself very reputably, when all of a sudden, as if recollecting something, he pulled two papers out of his pocket, which he presented to me with great ceremony, saying 'Here, my dear friend, is a quarter of a pound of tea and a half-pound of sugar I have brought for you; for though it is not in my power at present to pay you the two guineas you so generously lent me, you, nor any one else, shall ever have it to say that I want gratitude.' This was too much," continued the narrator, "I could no longer keep my feelings, but desired him to turn out of my chambers directly; which he very coolly did, taking up his tea and sugar; and I never saw him afterwards."

He must have been constantly meeting with a *contretemps* of this nature; the fact being that he was so simple-minded as to be imposed upon by any impudent fellow; and the class of man with whom he must frequently have associated was that Irishman who believes himself to be a perfect gentleman. In the smaller towns in his native land he still struts into bars and billiard rooms, treats the company with easy patronage and is called "Captain" by the billiard-markers. If he chances to meet a stranger of a better class, he forces his acquaintance on him, and, refusing to be snubbed, trades in every direction upon being on terms of the closest intimacy with him, calling him by his Christian name in public, and if he finds him in the company of ladies, pushing himself forward to obtain an introduction. This type of impostor swarmed in Fleet Street during the greater part of the last century, calling himself an author, and being nightly "flown with insolence and wine." In the eighteenth century he had many representatives in the same neighbour-

hood, and the least cunning among them would far outwit Goldsmith. When they learned of his being in funds, their devotion to him and their allusions to the old country must have been touching.

This year, which opened with the news of his having received £500 from his play, must have been a very trying one to him, through the demands of these worthless adventurers on the one hand, and his popularity with some of the most distinguished men in England on the other. If he had had even the most rudimentary knowledge of the art of getting on in the world, he would, of course, have dropped the acquaintance of the detrimentals and cultivated the others; but there he was, endeavouring to find a substitute for John Newbery, who had died during the previous December, to make advances to him on account of a work not yet begun, in order that he might be able to lend money to the worthless crew that haunted the taverns and dogged him to his rooms. There he was, making a jest of pretending to resent the undue familiarity of a vulgar pork-butcher in calling him Noll, and yet quite serious (according to some authorities solemnly accepted by grave biographers) in resenting Johnson's calling him "Goldy!" Everybody knew Johnson's delightful habit of giving amusing nicknames to his most cherished friends, and there could not possibly be one among them who did not feel complimented by this show of familiarity. And yet we are asked to believe that Goldsmith, who was "hail-fellow-well-met" with butcher and baker and candlestick maker—the first two, at any rate, can be vouched for—became peevish because his best friend paid him a compliment which Kelly or Kenrick would have given anything to receive!

Surely the explanation of his objection to be called "Goldy" was on account of its being so painfully *lucus a non lucendo*. "Goldy—Goldy," we hear him grumble, the twinkle in his eye all the time, "the idea of calling me Goldy, when I haven't set eyes on a bit of it this twelve-month!" Even without the story of the pork-butcher and his ignorant familiarity, we should have laughed at the suggestion of Goldsmith's objecting to be called "Goldy." If we had heard that, when the fellow called out "Noll," he rose and walked out of the

room, we might possibly have thought that he was sensitive on the point of nicknames; but with that story, as told by Glover, before us, we have no trouble in arriving at what we believe to be a correct solution of his show of petulant vanity when Johnson curtailed his name, as he did Sheridan's, and Boswell's, and Beauclerk's.

It was in these days that he instituted his "Shoemaker's Holiday" entertainment—one that has been imitated by several generations of literary and artistic brethren in London. The happy name was, of course, suggested by the title of Dekker's play. Half a dozen friends would start on foot for an excursion into the country after breakfast on Sunday, dining at a cheap ordinary in the northern heights and returning to sup together at a tavern. We do not hear that he succeeded in getting any of his better class of acquaintance to accompany him upon these rambles; most of his companions were men who were accustomed to think of "a cut from the joint and pastry" for tenpence—the Highbury *carte du jour*—in the light of festive fare. One of them was a quaint person, such as was always to be found about an attorney's office down to the days of Dickens—an elderly copying clerk of methodical habits and simple tastes, who refused on principle to pay more than a fixed sum for a meal. If Beauclerk or Langton or Boswell had met Goldsmith leading his nondescript crew along the Surrey highway on a Sunday morning the result would have been profitable. We should have heard what they looked like. But it is not difficult to picture them on their trudge, careless as to their dress and without a care at heart—for the time being.

And when the leader of the little band found himself back at his rooms in the Temple, he brought out of his desk the manuscript which was now in his thoughts day and night, as it had been for some months, and added a couple of lines, suggested, it may be, by some object or incident which had struck him during the day's ramble. We know what this manuscript became in the course of time. One day during this summer Cooke dropped in upon him and found him just putting away what he had written, and he read it to his visitor. It contained ten lines of *The Deserted Village*:

Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
How often have I paus'd on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighb'ring hill,
The hawthorn bush with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whisp'ring lovers made.

Those were the lines that he had just written, and "Let me tell you this is no bad morning's work," he cried, exultantly.

We do not know what his visitor thought on the subject; but we know what the opinion of the world of readers has been for nearly a hundred and fifty years on that morning's work.

He had the poem close to him all this year, working at it, as he did at all his poems, with patient care, applying his exquisite sense of balance—his exquisite fastidiousness in the choice of the word of the exact shade of thought or feeling, to every line. And the sweet melody of melancholy which is woven through the poem from word to word, represented, we know, what was in his own heart all the time; for the news had reached him of the death of his brother Henry, the one whom he "loved better than most men," as he wrote in his dedication of this poem to Sir Joshua Reynolds.

He was not accustomed to treat his writing of poetry so lightly as he did the execution of his commissions for the booksellers. He never hurried over a line of his verses. He thought over every word, and as we have already mentioned in connection with *The Traveller*, his manuscript pages were crowded with corrections and interlineations. He was nursing this new poem of his for two years close to his heart before he let it go from him to become the crown of the labours of his life.

He soon found that it was impossible for him to remain in town if he wished to complete the commission which he had received from Tom Davies and his associated booksellers for a *History of Rome*. He was to receive £250 for this work, and it was to be completed in two years. He had made his

rooms in Brick Court just too comfortable, and they were just too handy for the Fleet Street loafers, to allow of his having a chance of doing any work that demanded serious application. It was not until he was dead that people became aware of the extent of his benefactions. His rooms must have been constantly besieged, so that he had little time for work. He had always a train of pensioners—widows (possibly some of them were really widows) with their children (possibly some of them were really their own children)—unfortunate wretches whom he had once befriended and who knew that they were safe in clinging to him; all sorts of sufferers—importunate and impostors—he did his best for them all. And the sacrifices that he made for them! It is recorded on good authority that upon one occasion he was just sitting down to a meal when an appeal was made to him; some one was starving. Without a second word he swept the contents of the table into the basket saying, "Now, let me only suppose that I have eaten a heartier breakfast than usual, and I am nothing out of pocket."

It soon became obvious to his true friends—most likely the booksellers who were becoming uneasy—that he would never get through any work so long as he remained in London and made his chambers a rendezvous for the idle and the indigent. A neighbour of his in the Temple, Mr. Thomas Bott, who had acquired a personal interest in his industry, having lent him some money, was in the habit of taking country lodgings at a cottage on the Edgware Road, and, as there was a room to spare, may have urged him to be his companion at his retreat for a few months. Goldsmith was wise enough to see the advantage of entering into such an arrangement, and though, of course, unwilling to resume work, he took his departure from Brick Court for the time being, doubtless greatly to the chagrin of his friends of the Wednesday Club.

Though he loved the country he could rarely get farther away from London than Highbury or Islington. Only the year before, Percy, who was leaving his Vicarage at Easton Maudit for some months, invited him to occupy it till the return of the family; and Goldsmith seems to have been

anxious to accept that hospitable offer. He wrote, however, to make some inquiries before definitely deciding.

"1. In the first place, are there any troublesome prying neighbours?

"2. Can I have a chamber to myself and can I buy coals, &c.?

"3. Will I not cumber the house and take up the room of others?

"4. How long can you spare the apartment?

"5. Is there a stage? The price? and can any books be carried down?

"6. Can I have milk, meat and tea in the place?

"And lastly, will it be in any way inconvenient to you and Mrs. Percy? And when will you want to be down yourselves?"

It is not recorded either by Percy or any one else that the visit took place. The inquiries made by Goldsmith suggest certain unusual elements incidental to the invitation. It is difficult to know what Goldsmith could have meant by inquiring if he could have an apartment to himself. Did he fancy there was a likelihood of his having to share it with the butler, as he did his Garden Court staircase room?

The cottage on the Edgware Road seems to have been a delightful one. It had been built by a Piccadilly shoemaker for himself, and so it was promptly named by Goldsmith "Shoemaker's Paradise"—a fitting objective for a "Shoemaker's Holiday." The garden was laid out in formal style, with plaster deities of the second and third-class, naiads and dryads, and nymphs, and fauns, with grottoes and fountains; and these he cannot but have felt to constitute a certain stimulating *entourage* for the writing of a *History of Rome*.

There would have been but little chance of his doing any work in London during these months, for the Wilkes fever was raging there with the virulence of a plague, and the town was topsy-turvy. The Wilkes mob had things all their own way. The carnival frenzy that admitted of the overturning of the State coach of the Austrian Ambassador

while the rioters chalked "No. 45" on the soles of his shoes—a symbol which must have been mysterious to the unfortunate victim—was not to be checked by the contemptible Government that held the reins, but without any knowledge of whether they were to be used for leading or driving.

"Undisturbed by the obscene tumult which raged all around him," Goldsmith laboured at his *History of Rome*, and meditated upon his *Deserted Village*. His friend Bott owned a gig, and at rare intervals drove with him to London for an hour or two, returning—not without risk—in the early hours of the morning to "Shoemaker's Paradise." And equally undisturbed by the Comus clamour of the rabble rout both in the streets and the Houses of Parliament, Art was meditating upon a scheme, the results of which were greater than any one associated with the original movement could have anticipated. An accidental word or two spoken in a coterie of artists acted as a tongue of flame upon tinder, and in a brief space of time the phrase "An English Academy of Arts" was flying around. The movement—the second of the kind—gathered strength every hour; it was a beautiful and lusty child; and it only wanted a competent sponsor to set it upon its feet. The godfather was forthcoming. Reynolds had discussed the movement with West in private and had consented to join hands with his brother artists, Chambers, Cotes, and Moser. He entered the room where a Committee of the whole fraternity was sitting, and at the moment of his appearing at the door, inspired by one thought, the members sprang to their feet and hailed him as President.

Before many months had passed the Academy had received Royal Patronage, and Reynolds had been knighted. Johnson received the appointment of Professor of Ancient Literature, and Oliver Goldsmith became the first Professor of History in December 1769, when the organisation of the Royal Academy was completed.

CHAPTER XXV

MAKING MONEY AND SPENDING IT
1768—1769

It was in this same year, 1768, that Goldsmith formed a close friendship with one of the greatest men of the age. General Oglethorpe had distinguished himself in many ways and in many directions. His intimate connection with Wesley's mission to Georgia is well known. He had studied many social questions and had advocated many reforms, bringing to bear upon all an eminently sane mind and a ripe judgment. That such a man should appreciate Goldsmith and become intimate with him, not on account of anything that he had written, but by reason of something that he had said, rather tends to the belief that there was more in Goldsmith's conversation, when he chose to talk freely and sincerely, than some of his friends seemed to imagine there could be.

In writing to him Oglethorpe commented thus on one of his remarks: "How just, sir, were your observations that the poorest objects were by extreme poverty deprived of the benefit of hospitals erected for the relief of the poorest. Extreme poverty which should be the strongest recommendation to charity, is here the insurmountable objection, which leaves the distressed to perish." General Oglethorpe sent with his letter £5, which he begged Goldsmith to distribute for him, for the immediate relief of any cases that he knew to be deserving, and he concluded his letter with an invitation to his country house, Cranham Hall, Essex.

This letter shows very clearly the impression made upon him by Goldsmith, and especially by the soundness of Goldsmith's remarks upon matters of great social and economic importance. It is difficult to reconcile such evidence of the

effect of his conversation with the accounts given by Boswell of his feebleness in this direction. But, as we have already remarked, Boswell's attempts to produce evidence in favour of his statements, go far to prove just the opposite to what he meant to prove.

The truth seems to us to be that Goldsmith suited his conversation to the company in which he found himself. He made very good fun (he thought) out of Boswell, by adopting the Irish form of humour of pretending to be a fool, not giving a thought to the possible consequences of such an attitude in the presence of one whose foolishness was not a pretence. But when he came to talk with men like Oglethorpe, he was himself—the man of large views, founded on observation and experience—in short the man of his Essays—the observer in *The Citizen of the World*. The fact of his maintaining the opinions which he had formed on certain matters, social and artistic, and eventually proving them to be right, points to his being anything but a simpleton in ideas.

At the same time we do not think that Oglethorpe acted upon a sound impulse in entrusting him with money for the relief of deserving cases of extreme poverty. It was Goldsmith's weakness of discrimination in such matters that was his ruin, keeping him constantly poor, and compelling him to undertake uncongenial work in order to find money, not for his own necessities, but for those of other people—the majority of them impostors. There was, for instance, the case of the swindler, who called himself the Chevalier de Champigny, who was obtaining subscriptions for a projected *History of England* in fifteen volumes, to be written in French. Goldsmith, in order to help him, handed him a full subscription of seven and a half guineas, though, as Percy said, "he probably had not another left in his pocket." Again there was an Irishman named Griffin who approached him begging him to try to induce Garrick to add his recommendation to Goldsmith's to get him appointed teacher of French to an important school. How far Goldsmith assisted him with money does not appear; but Garrick gave him a testimonial, and the fellow got the place, only to decamp after a month or two with everything he could lay his hands on.

Another adventurer of the original Irish stock whom he should have shaken off early in their acquaintance was named Hiffernan. He had followed the Dublin profession of "going to be a doctor," and came to London to practise it there. He picked up odd jobs on the papers, and, hanging on to Goldsmith, must have got many guineas out of him. He fell asleep one evening when Bickerstaff had invited him and Goldsmith to hear him read a new play, and unfortunately, the literary entertainment had been preceded by one of a more material form, in which Hiffernan, as usual, had indulged too freely. He began to snore before the second act was reached. The author fondly thought that he could successfully compete with such rivalry; but before it was half over he found out his mistake. Rather than submit to the ignominy of taking a part in the duet, Bickerstaff stopped reading. "Never mind the brute, but go on. He would serve Homer just so, if he were reading his own works," said Goldsmith.

Kenrick may have been in the bar of the tavern or behind the door when this unrehearsed scene was being enacted, and as usual, the scoundrel misrepresented it, but in so wretched an attempt at an epigram, it only deserves to be quoted as evidence of how contemptible Kenrick was as a writer. The dregs of Grub Street could scarcely have produced a more wretched thing.

> What are your Britons, Romans, Grecians,
> Compared with thorough bred Milesians!
> Step into Griffin's shop he'll tell ye
> Of Goldsmith, Bickerstaff and Kelly.
> And take one Irish evidence for t'other,
> Ev'n Homer's self is but their foster-brother.

The doggerel speaks for itself, and makes one wonder how it ever came to be printed.

It was in October that Goldsmith returned to London from the Edgware Road cottage, and Johnson welcomed him back. Upon the three off-days from the Thrales at Streatham Johnson seems to have lost no opportunity of being in his company. At the Club, at those well-furnished rooms in the Temple, and at coffee houses without number they made a point of meeting, and of leaving themselves open to the

merriment of every one with any sense of the incongruous who saw them side by side. The one a big-boned, roughly-clad giant, the other small, thick-set, over-dressed, needing to tilt his head far to one side in order to look up to his companion. The one lumbering along in mighty strides, the other stumping along taking two strides to every one of his. They must have suggested to many onlookers one of Admiral Hawke's three-deckers with a cock-boat at its lee making extremely bad weather and steering awry through being blanketed by the bulk of the other.

So they marched down the Strand one day and through the King's Mews by Northumberland House, on to Westminster Abbey. They found themselves among the busts at Poet's Corner. Johnson pointed to them and murmured:

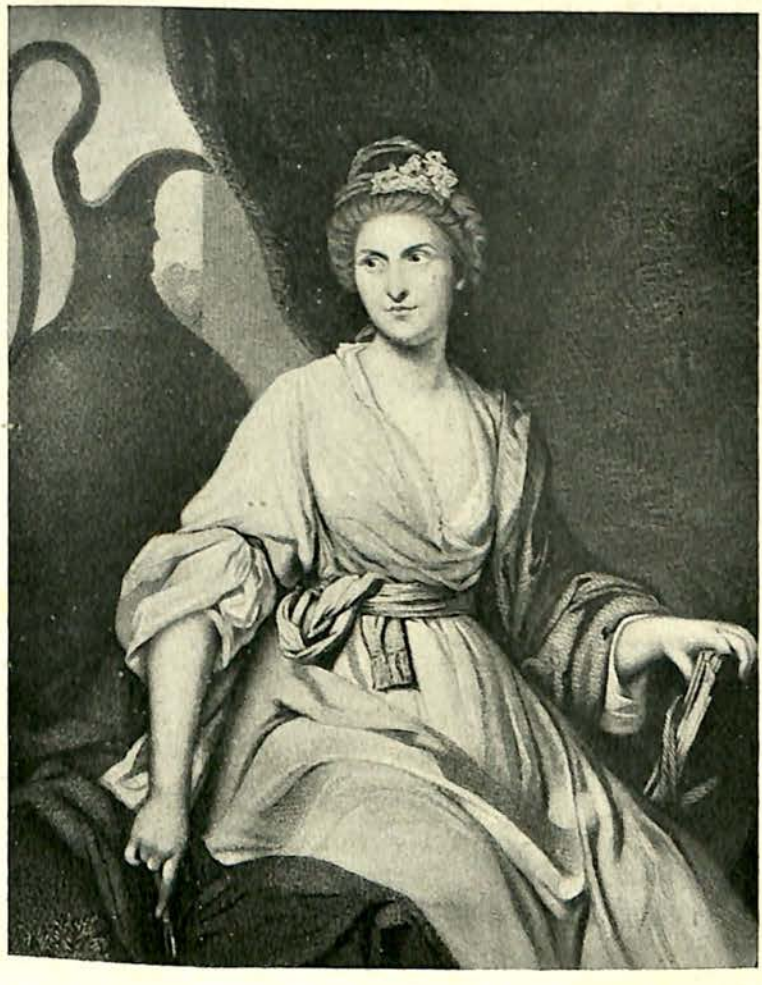
Forsitan, et nostrum nomen, miscebitur istis.

Then they walked back to Fleet Street; but just as they were about to pass through Temple Bar, Goldsmith stopped, pointed to the ghastly decoration of rebels' heads which still remained spiked on the top since the executions after the Jacobite rising. We are pretty sure that he borrowed Johnson's ponderous tones, though his eyes did not lose their twinkle, while he pointed upward saying:

Forsitan, et nostrum nomen, miscebitur istis.

The stability of Temple Bar must have been threatened by the thunder of Johnson's laughter; for there never was any one so generous of his laughter or so timely with it as Johnson; and of this fact no one was better aware than Goldsmith. It was Johnson's tremendous laughter that appalled the box of wreckers on the first night of *She Stoops to Conquer*, and made the success of the piece certain. Goldsmith appreciated Johnson to the full; it was he who would not accept Gray's description of him, "Look, look, there goes Ursa Major." "There's nothing of the bear about him but the skin," said Goldsmith.

It was with Johnson he went to Oxford on the completion of his *Roman History* in 1769, and was given the degree of M.B., *ad eundem gradum*, but Mr. Forster, who was very



LADY DIANA BEAUCLERK.

From a mezzotint engraving.

unlucky in his attempts to give chapter and verse for Goldsmith's degrees, mentions that there is a break in the continuity of the University records during this year, so that he was unable to obtain corroboration of Bishop Percy's statement to the effect that Goldsmith had been so honoured. Forster found out, however, that the visit to Oxford did take place, and that it was in response to the invitation of Chambers, the distinguished lawyer, who had become a member of the Club, when Hawkins' welcome retirement made room for some new blood. The Club was accumulating distinction in these days. Goldsmith was becoming more famous every year, and the name of Burke was honoured above that of any politician in England; Reynolds had been proclaimed by every one except the King, who preferred West, the greatest painter in England, and Topham Beauclerk had carried off Lady Bolingbroke, and when her husband got his divorce, married her. She had been Lady Diana Spencer, and she was thus able to have associated with her title once more the name of the chaste goddess, when she was united by the Church to Beauclerk. As Lady Diana Beauclerk she became almost famous as an artist in her own day. She is still highly respected by print collectors. Her style had a good deal of the graceful lines of Angelica Kauffman and Cipriani, though she was never so ambitious as either.

It was Goldsmith who had suggested the enlarging of the borders of the Club, giving as his reason that the original members had by this time "travelled over each other's minds." "Sir, you have not travelled over my mind, I promise you," cried Johnson; but the feeling was distinctly in favour of an increase in the membership, and in the course of a short time, the limit of twenty was reached, and a few years later ten additions were made, and this number was never exceeded.

As this year went on the position of Goldsmith became more difficult than it had ever been. He had undoubtedly come to see the wisdom of the advice given to him by his best friends to cut himself adrift from his old associates, whose most prominent traits have already been indicated, and he began to perceive that if he did not speedily do so, he would soon sink to the level of the least desirable among them. The

doors of a better class of friends were open to him, and he felt that he had but to enter to live a different sort of life from that which had kept him poor and in debt. He made a move in the right direction; but he had not learned the secret of being able to mingle on equal terms with persons in easy circumstances, only so far as one whose circumstances were mostly extremely uneasy should do. He had an idea that it was necessary for him to conduct his life as they did theirs—with a careless disregard for the smaller economies which are common to the lower grade. He made a mistake—one into which a good many other men of his type have fallen: he did not form his own estimate of what his expenditure should be, he allowed others who knew nothing about it to do it for him, and he accepted their judgment. The art of cutting a figure in the society of the great has at all times required a great deal of study by such aspirants as have empty pockets, and few of them quite master it—those who do are called adventurers. But Oliver Goldsmith had not even acquired a rudimentary knowledge of the art of being artful, and the consequences to himself were disastrous. He found that his new friends were as expensive to entertain as his old; and when he was handsomely entertained by them he could not but return their civilities. He seems to have borrowed money in many directions, and to have outrun the advances made to him in a generous spirit, but on a business scale, by the booksellers. He flung about the money so acquired, and did not seem inclined to make any serious effort to redeem his liabilities by work. When he had delivered his *History of Rome* he gave himself completely up to his new life of extravagance and social pleasure. He had never been so idle since he came to London, and, as usual, with the duration of idleness came an increased reluctance to work.

Beyond a doubt, Mrs. Milner had made a true estimate of his character when she had said that he would do well to allow her to look after his money for him as she looked after the pocket money of the young gentlemen at the school. He never realised the importance, not of saving—it would be going too far to expect him to think of saving—but of spending his money in a right way. He had received within a year a sum which should have enabled him to live easily for three

years, and this space would have been ample to allow of his writing another masterpiece of fiction, for which he could certainly have commanded as much as he was paid for his *History of Rome*. But he never gave himself a chance. His temperament was such as prevented his being able to regulate his life—to make it conform with his circumstances.

The *History* when it left his hands was a masterpiece, but not one in the sense in which *The Vicar of Wakefield* was a masterpiece. It was only a masterpiece of compilation, and of suitability to the purpose for which it was designed. It was meant to make the study of the history of Rome pleasing to beginners, and it fulfilled its object so well that it remained for nearly a century practically without a competitor in the market. And it may truly be said that, while almost every *Roman History* that has been published since Goldsmith's, is very much more accurate, yet not one has been so interesting. When one hears a great deal about the necessity for erudition, one is tempted to inquire what is the value of erudition in a book if no one will read it? The difficulty of getting a volume of history of any sort that will attract rather than repel a young student was solved by Goldsmith, and since his Histories have been discarded no others that have been written have taken their place. This appears to us to be all that can be said on the subject; but to say so much is to say a good deal.

Dr. Johnson in referring to Goldsmith's *Roman History* amazed Boswell by the measure of his praise.

"Whether we take Goldsmith as a poet, as a comic writer, or as an historian, he stands in the first class," said Johnson.

Boswell: "An historian? My dear sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the *Roman History* with the works of other historians of this age?" Johnson: "Why, who are before him?" Boswell: "Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose history we find such penetration; such painting?" Johnson: "Sir, you must consider how that penetration and how that painting are employed. It is not history; it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history piece; he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look on Robert-

son's work as a romance and try it by that standard. History it is not. Besides sir, it is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has done this in his history. Now Robertson might have put twice as much in his book; Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool; the wool takes up more room than the gold.' No sir. I always thought that Robertson would be crushed with his own weight—would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know. Robertson detains you a great deal too long. No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: 'Read over your compositions and whenever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out!' Goldsmith's Abridgement is better than that of Lucius Florus or Eutropius, and I will venture to say that if you compare him with Vertot in the same places of the Roman History, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying everything that he has to say in a pleasing manner."

While any one accustomed to Boswell's methods would feel, from reading his record of his conversation, that he had a grudge against Robertson, and was anxious to pay it off, as usual, through Johnson, it must be acknowledged that he shows Johnson laying his finger at once upon the vital points of both writers. Goldsmith sought to elucidate his subject, Robertson to envelope it in a cloud of words. Moreover, Goldsmith's judgment on most matters with which he had to deal was nearly always sound. He freed his mind from all prejudice and he dealt with what appeared to him to be the facts material to any issue, in the most fair-minded spirit. He never degenerated into a special pleader or a partisan. Even though rigid criticism of his *Roman History* will assert that all he did was to put into his own words what other writers up to his time had said in theirs, still the result of his doing so was to transform what was unattractive into what was supremely absorbing. He made the learning of history as delightful as the reading of a Persian tale

—what Johnson rightly predicted his *Natural History* would be.

Tom Davies and his partner in the *History of Rome* had every reason to be gratified by the reception of the work, which was issued in two volumes of 500 pages each, in the May of 1769. But some months previous to its appearance the author had entered into an agreement with Griffin, the bookseller, to write for him a large *Natural History*. It was to be in eight volumes, every one containing between 400 and 500 pages, and payment was to be made to him at the rate of one hundred guineas a volume.

Now, here was a chance that would have delighted most writers for the booksellers. Talk of Royal pensions—here he had offered to him an annuity of a hundred guineas a year for eight years, and, taking into account the value of money in the mid-years of the eighteenth century, this sum should have been sufficient to keep him, and to keep him very well too. But when the *Roman History* appeared and was likely to turn out a gold-mine to the booksellers, Tom Davies approached him with an offer of five hundred guineas for an *English History* in four volumes, stipulating that the whole was to be delivered within two years from the date of the agreement, and not to be paid for until the work was completed.

Here then, he had a chance of supplementing his hundred a year by another hundred guineas, to be continued for five years, or by two hundred and fifty guineas a year for two years; so that, looking ahead, say, for five years only—quite a strain of foresight for Goldsmith—he had an annual income assured to him of £273 equal to about £650 or £700 of our money.

And all that he would have to do for this money would be to apply himself rather diligently to his work for two years—two volumes a year of the *English History* and a little more than one of the *Natural History* would mean assiduity, but not beyond his powers of work—and after the first two years he could afford to relax and only write one volume a year for the remaining three years of the five.

But this did not exhaust the list of his commissions overlapping one another, for he had an offer from Davies to write an Abridgement of his *Roman History*, for the use of schools, to be issued in one volume *duodecimo*, and for this he was

to receive fifty guineas, and an agreement embodying this proposal was signed in the September of the following year (1770).

There were very few authors in England in Goldsmith's time who were in the habit of receiving such offers for the work of compiling. But as he already occupied before the world an unassailable position as poet, novelist, and playwright, and having, moreover, elevated the work of compilation into an art, commanding as much attention and respect as he could achieve by the exercise of his inventive gifts, he might surely have sat down to his desk with a light heart to begin his five years of congenial and honourable work—work that had no tinge of the old drudgery about it.

But Oliver Goldsmith was Oliver Goldsmith—that is all that need be said in extenuation of his failure to run on the lines laid down for him by the tradesmen who were—as he always acknowledged them to be—his best friends. Within five years he had completed all the commissions with which he had been entrusted, and had given the world two works over and above his contract—the one a poem called *The Deserted Village* and the other a play called *She Stoops to Conquer*, and by both he had made hundreds of pounds; and yet he died overwhelmed by debt, and Johnson wrote his epitaph for Westminster Abbey and another for the reading of his friends—the latter is a masterly summing up of his life:

"Was ever poet so trusted before?"

That was Goldsmith's life. He could do well for every one but himself. He never succeeded in ordering his life as other men have ordered their lives. He had sounded all the depths of human life and had scaled its highest heights; he knew all about life except how to live. It was not the need of money that overwhelmed him and thrust him into the grave, it was his ignorance of how to live for himself and not for other people. During the five years of his life, beginning at the period which we have now reached in his history, he must have received more than the equivalent of £5000 of our money, and yet he died deeply in debt, and having nothing to show for his money beyond a score or so of beggars weeping outside his door.

He knew everything about life except how to live. He made many experiments and he had many experiences, but he never acquired the knowledge of how to live. No man was more industrious than he, especially during his last five years upon earth, and certainly no man that ever wrote employed his time so well. These five years represented a culmination of literary excellence—*History of Rome*, *History of England*, *The Deserted Village*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Animated Nature*—a pretty fair list to be achieved within five years—and yet he was pushed into the grave beneath the weight of the anxieties of a life that should have been free from any anxiety. No stranger catastrophe is to be found recorded in the life story of any one of those abnormal men on whom the burden of genius has been laid, unfitting them for living in a world the fundamental principle of whose existence is the maintenance of the normal.

CHAPTER XXVI

"THE JESSAMY BRIDE" AND HER FAMILY

1769

THE most interesting of the chapters of the last eventful five years of Goldsmith's life is undoubtedly that which was devoted to his friendship with the Horneck family. The episode comes upon us suddenly. Nothing that we have heard about Goldsmith and his appearance in the world leads up to it. Everything that we have heard of him has tended strongly to turn us away from expecting such an episode. We have seen him as the clumsy awkward lout wearing clothes that added to the absurdity of a sufficiently absurd person —as a man with something less than the most ordinary graces of manner and of speech—a man on whom the struggle with adversity had left its marks, and yet all at once he appears before us on terms of the most delightful intimacy with a family who had been brought up in an atmosphere of refinement and of fashion—the two are not always found united.

We must confess that in these circumstances there is great need to be astonished. We feel, after undergoing a course of Boswell's Goldsmith, that we have been brought face to face with a new person, just as, reading Fanny Burney after Boswell, we felt that we had made the acquaintance of a new Johnson. There was nothing about the Horneck family to lead one to suppose that they would be attracted to a friendship for a man solely on account of his having attained distinction in the world of art or letters. They were not particularly devoted to either art or literature; and they certainly had nothing of Mrs. Thrale's pretensions to form a *salon* on a French model; ladies who have had such an ambition have not recoiled from the objectionable when it

has come in the questionable shape of a man of genius—Mrs. Thrale at any rate did not shrink from such a trial; for she knew enough natural history to be aware of the fact that the hunting of lions cannot be maintained with any measure of success in kid gloves. The Hornecks seem to have cared nothing for specimens of the larger carnivora, however mightily voiced. They were an ordinary family of refinement and healthy gaiety. They were accustomed to mingle with the best people of the day, and the beauty of the two girls could not but cause them to be welcomed by the most fastidious of the best. They were about the last family in the world with whom such a man as the Goldsmith of Boswell would be likely to become intimate, and the fact that they received Goldsmith and cultivated his society and gave him many tokens of their appreciation of himself without any regard to his achievements, goes far to justify what we have already said on the subject of the Goldsmith of Boswell.

Mrs. Horneck was the widow of Captain Kane Horneck, the representative of a family whose ancestors had come to England in 1680 from the Rhine provinces, eventually settling in Devonshire. When Goldsmith was introduced to them by Reynolds, the family consisted of a son, Charles, and two daughters, Mary and Catharine; Charles had just come of age, and after travelling on the Continent, where he met Henry Bunbury, had obtained a commission in the Guards. The girls were extremely beautiful; they had that girlish loveliness which, going with exquisite grace and elegance of form, caused the eyes of the great painters to be turned toward them, and when the painters had pointed to them, the eyes of all the world of fashion were directed to them. Sir Joshua painted Catharine, and lived to make one of his most perfect child pictures in the portrait of her son—she married her brother's friend, Henry Bunbury, when he was twenty-one and she was not quite twenty, and Johnson's wedding gift to her was a Family Bible. The elder girl, Mary, also sat to Sir Joshua, in a modified Oriental costume, and when the portrait was finished, he was so pleased with it that he kept it hanging in his studio until the day of his death, affirming that it was the best picture he had ever painted. The gossip of the day alleged that the pigments had not only been mixed

with brains, according to his own advice to the amateur who asked him for some hints, but with love as well. But as the girl was just eighteen—she looks nearer sixteen—when the portrait was painted, and he was forty-four, and had known her from her childhood, the story may be set aside as an idle invention. The portrait is, however, a delightful one, and as full of the spirit of life and the soul of girlhood as the artist's Lady Betty Hamilton. Of its beauty every one who has seen it can speak, and as to its fidelity, one of the most astonishing pieces of evidence possible to imagine in such a connection was forthcoming on the publication some twelve years ago of the *Jerningham Letters*. Lady Bedingfeld's journal contains the following entry, opposite the date September 19, 1833: ..

"When the Queen returned to the Drawing-room we found several ladies there. I observed a very old lady with striking remains of beauty, and whose features seemed very familiar to me. I felt to know her features by heart, and at last I heard her name, Mrs. Gwyn, the widow of a general and near ninety. I had never seen her before, but when I was a girl, my uncle, the poet, gave me a portrait of her, copied from Sir Jos. Reynolds, small size, in a Turkish costume and attitude. This picture is still at Cassy, and, of course, must be very like her since it led me to find her out."

There can scarcely be a doubt that the picture was "very like" when Dunkarton's engraving of it was sufficient to allow of the original being identified with it, sixty-three years after it was painted—very like indeed!

This painting was bequeathed by Reynolds to Mary Horneck who, some years after Goldsmith's death, married Colonel Gwyn, one of the King's equerries; and at her death it passed into the possession of her grand-nephew, Catharine Bunbury's grandson; and it remained for many years at the seat of the Bunburys, Barton Hall, Norfolk. The exquisite representation by Sir Joshua Reynolds of the two sisters—one of the most beautiful pictures produced during the eighteenth century, and in point of composition equal to anything that Rembrandt painted—is now, we believe, in

MISS HORNECK.

("THE JESSAMY BRIDE.")

From the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

the collection of Mr. W. W. Astor. Hoppner also made a portrait of each of the sisters. A miniature of Mary, nine inches by five, beautifully painted, was sold with a large number of mementoes of her—fans, diamonds and lace, every article a work of perfect art—at Christie's about ten years ago. This portrait must have been painted when she was nearly seventy, the sweetest old lady possible to imagine, but only giving the merest suggestion of the early work of Sir Joshua.

These lovely sisters were naturally great favourites in the varied societies where they moved. In the history of the last quarter of the eighteenth century we are constantly catching glimpses of some of them. Mrs. Bunbury's husband was, as a caricaturist, far more refined than either Gilray or Rowlandson, and in the number of suggestive touches in his drawing, surpassed only by Hogarth. He was, however, inferior in point of draughtsmanship to any of the three. In Fanny Burney's diary and letters we find occasional references to Mary. She was Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen, and was on the most affectionate terms with all the princesses. It was in agreement with a compact made with one of them that her remains were laid to rest in the royal vault. For many years she lived at Kew, whence she wrote to the last some delightful letters to the children of her old associates at the palace. She had no children herself, but adopted the daughter of a distant relation of her husband, to whom she left her jewels. Northcote mentions her as liking in her old age to come to his studio and talk over the past days with him, when he was a pupil of Reynolds; here she met Hazlitt and delighted him by the enthusiastic way she talked of Goldsmith, for whom she had the greatest affection.

Altogether she must have been one of those delightful women who never grow old—a rare woman who, after being for many years an important figure in palaces and on the most intimate terms with the Queen and the princesses, liked most to recall her friendship for the poet who had given her the name that connects her with English literature—the Jessamy Bride.

Edmund Burke was one of the trustees of the estate of

Captain Kane Horneck, and in that capacity must have had many opportunities of observing her development from a girl of beauty to a woman of character. One of his letters to her is preserved in the *Hanbury Correspondence*, It is dated February 1, 1792, and is quoted by Forster as follows:

"Your appreciation of anything I do is a satisfaction I feel very sensibly. From your childhood I have admired your heart and had a very good opinion of your judgment, and wished you all manner of happiness with an affection which, without violence, might be called paternal."

Such was the delightful family whom we find treating Oliver Goldsmith as one of themselves, welcoming him heartily when he visited them and choosing him to be their companion on a holiday excursion to France. Very different indeed was the welcome he received at Barton Hall from that accorded to him at Streatham Hall—the one the seat of an ancient family, the other the recent acquisition of a brewer, whose father had probably been a potman in a public-house, and who himself died of gluttony. "Goldsmith has sounded the depths of vulgarity," wrote Mrs. Thrale. So he had—upon one occasion, when a guest in her house. The talk turned upon a contemptible book which had just been written by Dr. Beattie—a book which has long ago passed into oblivion and which any man of letters whose judgment was worth anything would have condemned, though it really was not deserving even of the distinction of condemnation—Johnson and Mrs. Thrale were talking enthusiastically of this, when Goldsmith, who had long before seen what shallow stuff it was, protested in his own humourous way against the attention that was being given to the writer of one book when he himself had written so many, and no one was making a fuss about him.

"Ay, doctor," said Johnson, "but you must remember that forty-two sixpences go to every guinea," whereupon Mrs. Thrale clapped her hands with delight.

"Goldsmith," she wrote, "has sounded the depths of vulgarity,"—and of stupidity, she might have added, and of critical incompetence in addition. The spectacle of Johnson

and Mrs. Thrale in ecstacies over Beattie's book, and snubbing Oliver Goldsmith is not an edifying one to us to-day. Forty-two sixpences to a guinea! One book written by Dr. Beattie worth forty-two by Dr. Goldsmith! There is a fine piece of eighteenth-century literary criticism for twentieth-century readers to wonder at, unless they accept our advice and regard Johnson's remark as merely a good humoured "dig" at Goldsmith's dislike to Beattie. If Johnson's remark was really contemptuous it was contemptible; but he loved having a "dig" at some one's little weaknesses. As for Mrs. Thrale, she could only see that it was advisable for her to follow the voice of the crowd. The crowd were acclaiming Beattie and she clapped her hands in delight.

Very different people were the Hornecks. People of true refinement and true feeling, it did not take them long to find out what Goldsmith was at heart. Reynolds had done so years before, and so had Burke. The young Guardsman seems to have been on as friendly terms with him as were his sisters; and a little later, Henry Bunbury joined the others in his liking for the awkward genius. He accorded to him the compliment of a caricature, one of his best, giving us what we feel, with Reynolds's marvellous picture beside it, must have been an admirable likeness of Goldsmith, only with the most prominent features humourously emphasised.

His association with these people and on such terms must have been the greatest delight of his life, though they were only one family out of the many in the same position in life with whom he was well acquainted. His friend Cooke, possibly with a touch of envy, referred to the demoralising effect which his mingling with "the great" had upon him; but we cannot believe that he had the Hornecks in his mind at the time. There is not much demoralisation to a man of genius in being made the willing butt of a thousand little jests —banterings and persiflage—wordy battledore and shuttlecock of a delightful sort. We get a glimpse of it in the rhymed letter which he sent in reply to a belated invitation to dinner:

Your mandate I got,
You may all go to pot;
Had your senses been right
You'd have sent before night

As I hope to be saved,
I put off being shaved;
For I could not make bold
While the matter was cold,
To meddle in suds,
Or to put on my duds;
So tell Horneck and Nesbitt,
And Baker and his bit,
And Kauffman beside,
And the Jessamy Bride,
With the rest of the crew,
The Reynoldses two,
Little Comedy's face,
And the Captain in Lace—
(By the bye you may tell him,
I have something to sell him;
Of use I insist,
When he comes to enlist.
Your worships must know
That a few days ago,
An order went out,
For the foot guards so stout
To wear tails in high taste,
Twelve inches at least:
Now I've got him a scale
To measure each tail,
To lengthen a short tail
And a long one to curtail)—
Yet how can I when vext,
Thus stray from my text?
Tell each other to rue
Your Devonshire crew,
For sending so late
To one of my state.
But 'tis Reynolds's way
From wisdom to stray,
And Angelica's whim
To be frolick like him;
But, alas! your good worships, how could they be wiser,
When both have been spoil'd in to-day's *Advertiser?*

"Little Comedy" was his nickname for Catherine, and "The Captain in Lace" for Charles. The couplets bring before us, as no other document has ever done, the intimate relations existing between the various members of the circle. One has not heard before of his acquaintance with Angelica Kauffman, or with the Bakers—Dr. George Baker, Reynolds's medical adviser, was subsequently knighted. But especially

interesting it is to us to notice his "chaff" of the Guardsman. It is inconceivable that Goldsmith should be the stammering lout which some of his associates made him out to be, and yet on such terms with a man of fashion like young Horneck. The whole family were his friends and remained so to the last. They must have gone together to masquerades, Ranelagh suppers, and Pantheon entertainments, to say nothing of river parties and theatre parties. No doubt he entertained them in his usual extravagant style at his rooms; and it is equally certain that they responded from their house in Westminster. There was also Reynolds's house in Leicester Fields to be depended on, but there the rendezvous would be for supper not dinner; for dinner in Sir Joshua's dining-room was too much of a scramble upon ordinary occasions to be pleasant to the fastidious. He kept an open table, and his guests seem to have looked upon it as a tavern "ordinary." The service was as deficient as were the china and glass; and although there was usually abundance to eat and drink, yet before every one was satisfied, there was, as a rule, a good deal of noise. One guest, after having a sample of the Leicester Fields *ménage*, expressed his fervent belief that all the rest of the world must have been silent that evening.

It would certainly be to supper that Sir Joshua would invite his dearest friends; and it may be taken for granted that when little Dr. Goldsmith and little David Garrick were present, the entertainment would be as laughable as any that Foote could provide in the Haymarket. We have accounts of a Dumb Crambo collaboration between Garrick and Goldsmith, the greatest actor of his time repeating Hamlet's soliloquy, and the greatest poet of his time illustrating it with incongruous gestures. The effect must have been a masterpiece of comedy. And then possibly Garrick would give an imitation, such as delighted the Burney girls, of Cumberland the dramatist, whom some people seem to have mixed up with Goldsmith, in respect of that unhappy quality of envy causing him to decry the works of every one but himself; or of Johnson making love to the mature widow of opulent charms whom he married; and if the company survived the fits of laughter that such a performance produced, Dr. Goldsmith might possibly be tempted to sing one of his songs for

them or play his flute or to dance a minuet *solus*. But before this jesting had become fatiguing, Sir Joshua would lead Miss Kauffman to the harpsichord—it would be too much to imagine that he had become the possessor of that new-fangled instrument the Forte-piano—and the graceful Swiss lady, who had not ceased to be an accomplished musician when she became an accomplished artist, would sing a serious canzonet, before the sounds of carriages approaching and of the link boys shouting were heard, bringing about the separation of the party.

These were certainly the happiest days of Oliver Goldsmith's life. Even though he had to toil for hours during the day to execute the work with which he had been commissioned, he could still have the enjoyment that he so thoroughly relished, sitting in the midst of a circle of delightful people, and having his humour appreciated to the full by them—he could still have the satisfaction of bringing out of his desk on his return a manuscript over which he was taking some trouble, writing only a few lines on every page, and leaving a broad space between them which he never failed to fill up with alterations and corrections, changes of words and phrases, to pass his fastidious ear. This was the work of which he had read a few lines to a friend several months before, and now he was giving a touch of finality to the whole, which was a poem that he had entitled *The Deserted Village*.

CHAPTER XXVII

ON THE EVE OF A TRIUMPH
1769—1770

If it is true that a poet is born, not made, it is equally true that a poem is made not born. Percy had an opportunity of observing the processes of the creation of a work under the hand of a poet who, careless and apparently indifferent in regard to his other work, took the highest possible view of his responsibilities as a poet. He refers to the extraordinary ease with which Goldsmith's prose ran from his pen, scarcely a word being changed and every word so well chosen; and contrasts it with the labour he expended upon his poetry. He was for years working at *The Traveller*, and he was for years working at *The Deserted Village*. He seems to have felt that if he was but an author by profession, it had been laid on him to put the best of himself into his poetry. In endeavouring to form an estimate of the character of Oliver Goldsmith it may be as well to keep one's attention upon this fact. He was called an inspired idiot by one of the most superficial observers that ever elevated gossip to the rank of a profession. An inspired idiot! Never was there a more unfortunate inspiration than this of Walpole's. The inspired idiot as poet is the one who acts as if he believes that his work is finished when he has found his last rhyme. To endeavour to improve upon anything that he has flung from his pen would be, he believes, to cast a slur upon the validity of his inspiration. He feels that the malediction which the gentle copyist of the monastery appended to his transcript of the Apocalypse, would be wisely applied to him if he were to alter a single word that he has written in his poem. This is the inspired idiot, and he never was a poet.

Goldsmith was exactly the opposite to such a person. He

was in his relation to his poems exactly the opposite to what an observer of his casual ways of life would believe him to be. Casualties are to the casual, and assuredly he was familiar enough with the sequence; but when he was building up the two poems by which he meant to be remembered, he was another man. Had he modelled his way of living on the same principle that he adopted for the writing of his poems, his life would have been very different from the life of Oliver Goldsmith.

It is worthy of note that he never made the publication of a poem the subject of negotiation with the booksellers, and that he rarely spoke to any of his literary friends of his designs in respect of either *The Traveller* or *The Deserted Village*. No one had a suspicion before it was published that he was capable of writing the former, and among the hundreds of questions and answers which are so faithfully recorded in connection with the literary circle, not one has any reference to a forthcoming poem by Dr. Goldsmith. Among the many empty boastings of Dr. Goldsmith himself not one has a bearing upon this not altogether unimportant matter. Even when he read the few lines to his friend Cooke, he breathed nothing of his intentions in respect of them; he did not suggest that they were part of a long poem of which he had had the scheme in his mind for some years. He may have confided in Johnson and Reynolds, but if he did, they kept his secret intact.

What seems to us most astonishing is that none of his associates, after the publication of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, asked him why he did not sit down and write another novel—that none of them, after the publication of *The Traveller*, asked him when he meant to publish another such poem. It was not until *The Deserted Village* had been in the hands of the public for more than a year, placing him immediately at the head of the list of poets who followed Pope—some people, excellent critics, said Dryden—that a question was put to him on the subject of his poetry. It was at the Dinner of the Royal Academy, on St. George's Day, 1771, that Lord Lisburne asked him the very pertinent question, why he did not write more poetry, to which he replied, "My Lord, by courting the Muses I shall starve; but by my other labours I eat, drink, have good clothes, and enjoy the luxuries of life."

Of course there were numbers of other people besides Lord Lisburne interested in Goldsmith as a poet; but Boswell was not among them, so he carefully avoided recording the asking of Lord Lisburne's question by any member of the literary circle.

But the poem was undoubtedfy finished—only for some alteration that he made every day to some word or phrase—and placed in the hands of the printers in the year 1769. It was twice announced in the *Advertiser* in this year and yet it was not until May 26 in the year following that it was in the hands of the public.

It is rather remarkable that there should be no contemporary mention of the fact that some months—perhaps as many as six—before the actual publication of the poem in quarto, it was privately printed in octavo form. For more than a century and a quarter after the poet's death it was assumed that the first issue of the work was in May 1770. It is only within the last ten years that collectors have become aware of the fact that there were actually three editions of the private printing. When the discovery was made there was naturally a great search instituted for copies of the first octavo edition, the distinctive mark of which is a misprint in the thirty-seventh line which reads:

Amidst the bowers the tyrant's head is seen.

In the two subsequent issues of the privately printed edition the word *head* is altered to *hand*, as it appears in every subsequent edition. Only three copies of the poem in octavo with the misprint complete have up to the present been discovered, and of these one is now in America.

It is almost incredible that, of a poem which attracted so much attention when it was given to the public, an edition should have been privately circulated without a record being made of it, either by the author or one of his friends. But the fact that such an edition exists forces one to consider the possibility of its having been printed, as *The Hermit* was printed, for the entertainment of Lady Northumberland. But this can scarcely be thought of while the fact is before us that Percy, who would certainly have been aware of such an incident, makes no reference to it in the Life of

the poet for which he was responsible. To be sure, it must be noted that Percy in this Memoir states that *The Deserted Village* was published in 1769, and the private edition may have been issued as far back as this year; but Percy is not always to be depended on as regards his dates.

The fact is that the whole incident is mysterious and incapable of explanation on any assumption that can be called plausible. Boswell devotes some pages to Goldsmith's movements during the year 1769, but no word does he say to lead us to suppose that Goldsmith had just privately printed a poem or that he meant to publish one the following year. He gives us a delightful picture of the poet's strutting to and fro while waiting for a tardy guest at Mr. Boswell's hospitable rooms, bragging of his new suit, just as every one who has ever lived in Ireland for any length of time must have seen some grave-faced humourist doing, calling the attention of every one present to the imaginary beauties of his new coat, and winding up by declaring that it was a great day for Ireland when he made his first appearance in so elegant a garment—"as if," a Boswell would say, after witnessing so absurd a display—"as if the fortunes of his unhappy country could be materially affected by an incident which, if closely examined, must be pronounced trivial!" We wonder if Goldsmith made any sly reference to its being as great a day for Filby when he sent home that particular "suit of ratteen lined with satin" (*vide* the Filby bills) as it was for Corsica when Mr. Boswell appeared in the streets of London in the national costume of an island brigand-patriot.

The conversation afterwards took a turn for the worse, and poetry was discussed; but not a word is recorded as having been uttered respecting the poem by Oliver Goldsmith, M.B., which had been announced in the *Advertiser*.

Goldsmith was in a particularly good humour this evening, for he had recently persuaded the booksellers to make him an advance of £500 for the first five volumes of the *Natural History*, and he thereby saw his way clearly to write the two volumes of the *English History* for which he had been commissioned; and Johnson, being in equally exuberant spirits, was shouting down all rivals at the table, when Goldsmith paraphrased Cibber: "There is no arguing with Johnson,

for when his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt end of it."

That was the best thing which Boswell recorded in connection with his dinner party.

Many opportunities had he during this year of referring to Goldsmith. There was the case of Baretti, for instance, upon which we have already touched. Goldsmith detested this naturalised Italian, for naturalisation does not change a man's nature, and Baretti was eminently detestable, insulting Goldsmith every time they met, and also subjecting Mr. Boswell to the same course of treatment. We have already pointed out the subtlety with which the Scotsman paid him back; and also how he meanly ignored Goldsmith's share in the case. The Irishman paid back the Italian by heaping coals of fire on his head, sitting by his side in the coach when an application for bail was to be made, and giving evidence on his behalf in the "Awful Sessions House" as Boswell calls the Old Bailey. Goldsmith might have had nothing to say to the matter so far as Boswell's record is concerned; for all that the Scotsman was anxious to place on record was the smallness of the regard that Johnson had for Baretti, whom Boswell hated, and whom he confessed that he hoped to see hanged.

Not a word has this clever chronicler of small beer to say respecting *The Deserted Village*. Not a word has Mr. Thomas Davies, the conscientious bookseller, to say about the matter in which it might reasonably be expected he took a professional interest; and thus we are left to work out the puzzle of the privately printed edition of the poem without any contemporary help, and, if we please, to assume, as some collectors have done, that this octavo edition was really the original form in which the poem was given to the public. When we find before us a letter written by Goldsmith to his brother Maurice early in the year following (1770), we begin to be hopeful of a clue. But although the letter refers to his appointment to the professorship at the Royal Academy, and to the mezzotint of himself which had just been published, no allusion is made to *The Deserted Village*. Surely it might have been expected that any communication made at this time by the author of *The Deserted Village* to some one within easy reach of Lissoy,

would contain a reference to his having introduced the village into a poem; but not the most distant allusion is made to Lissoy's connection with Auburn—and this fact has certainly strengthened the hands of those critics who hold that Lissoy and Auburn have little in common.

But the letter must be quoted, indicating, as it does, the strong affection which the writer had for his old associations with Ireland, and also the carelessness of his friends in respect of the letters which he had written to them from time to time. They had given him up. It was only when a casual reference to his fame came under the notice of any of them that they were led to wonder if they could get anything out of him.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"I should have answered your letter sooner, but in truth I am not fond of thinking of the necessities of those I love, when it is so very little in my power to help them. I am sorry to find you are still every way unprovided for; and what adds to my uneasiness is that I have received a letter from my sister Johnson, by which I learn that she is pretty much in the same circumstances. As to myself, I believe I could get both you and my poor brother-in-law something like that which you desire, but I am determined never to ask for little things, nor exhaust any little interest I may have until I can serve you, him, and myself more effectually. As yet no opportunity has offered, but I believe you are pretty well convinced that I will not be remiss when it arrives. The king has lately been pleased to make me Professor of Ancient History in a royal Academy of Painting, which he has just established, but there is no salary annexed; and I took it rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to myself. Honours to one in my situation are something like ruffles to a man that wants a shirt. You tell me that there are fourteen or fifteen pounds left me in the hands of my cousin Lawder, and you ask me what I would have done with them. My dear brother, I would by no means give any directions to my dear worthy relations at Kilmore, how to dispose of money, which is, properly speaking, more theirs than mine. All that I can say is, that I entirely and this letter will serve to witness,

give up any right and title to it; and I am sure they will dispose of it to the best advantage. To them I entirely leave it: whether they or you may think the whole necessary to fit you out, or whether our poor sister Johnson may not want the half, I leave entirely to their and your discretion. The kindness of that good couple to our poor shattered family demands our sincerest gratitude, and though they have almost forgot me, yet, if good things at last arrive, I hope one day to return, and encrease their good humour by adding to my own. I have sent my cousin Jenny a miniature picture of myself, as I believe it is the most acceptable present I can offer. I have ordered it to be left for her at George Faulkenor's, folded in a letter. The face, you well know, is ugly enough but it is finely painted. I will shortly also send my friends over the Shannon some mezzo-tinto prints of myself and some more of my friends here, such as Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, and Colman. I believe I have written an hundred letters to different friends in your country, and never received an answer from any of them. I do not know how to account for this, or why they are unwilling to keep up for me those regards which I must ever retain for them. If then you have a mind to oblige me, you will write often whether I answer you or not. Let me particularly have the news of our family and old acquaintances. For instance, you may begin by telling me about the family where you reside, how they spend their time, and whether they ever make mention of me. Tell me about my mother, my brother Hodson, and his son; my brother Harry's son and daughter, my sister Johnson, the family of Ballyoughter, what is become of them, where they live, and how they do. You talked of being my only brother, I don't understand you—Where is Charles? A sheet of paper occasionally filled with news of this kind, would make me very happy, and would keep you nearer my mind. As it is, my dear brother, believe me to be yours, most affectionately,

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH."

Of course the reference to his acceptance of the Royal Academy appointment contains a slip of the pen. It can scarcely be doubted that he meant to say that he took it as a

compliment *from* the institution, not *to* the institution. The tone of the paragraph and of the one following it shows that he is not at all anxious to boast. He suffered for his solicitude in regard to his relations, for a nephew—a son of his sister who had married Daniel Hodson, thereby depriving Oliver Goldsmith of the money with which he might have gone to the University in the same rank as his brother Henry—turned up in London shortly afterwards and sponged upon him to the day of his death. It will be seen from Filby's bills that half the sum which he owed to the tailor at his death—it amounted to £79—was for this nephew of his. It will also be noticed that, at the death of his mother, Goldsmith not only went into mourning himself but put young Hodson into mourning as well. And yet Northcote was foolish enough to repeat the piece of malicious gossip that Goldsmith only went into half-mourning at his mother's death, and on being asked which of his connections had died, replied "a distant relative" —the most uncharacteristic Goldsmith story ever invented by the Kenrick gang.

The mezzotint referred to in the letter was done after the well-known portrait painted by Reynolds. It was engraved by Marchi under the supervision of Sir Joshua himself, and is to-day reckoned one of the finest of all the mezzotints of the eighteenth century. As to the portrait from which it was taken there can scarcely be a second opinion. It has always been looked upon as representing the noblest achievement, not merely of Reynolds, but of the art of which he was so true an exponent. No one can refer to it without enthusiasm, for every one that has eyes to see must be struck by the marvellous power with which all the great emotional elements mingled in Goldsmith's life are blended in the picture. Tragedy is in the expression, but it is tragedy with the twinkle of comedy; pathos is there, and its effect is not diminished by the note of humour of which one becomes conscious after looking at the picture for some time. And these elements are displayed against a background, so to speak, of exquisite simplicity of nature. Reynolds's portrait of Oliver Goldsmith is a biography in colour. And we all know that it could never have been what it is unless the painter had put the best of himself into it. Sympathy

is in every part of it; and as he worked at it day by day and came to see more and more into those secrets of character and emotion which none of his sitters could conceal from Reynolds, his sympathy broadened into the truest affection. That is the supreme achievement of the painter: he has not only put the man's life upon his canvas, he has put on record as well his own feelings in regard to his friend.

Reynolds painted the portrait for himself; but when the Duke of Dorset saw it he would not be denied it. He purchased it for Knowle. A copy was made by the painter for Thrale's collection at Streatham, where for forty-five years it hung by the side of Garrick, Burney, Burke, Johnson, Chambers, Reynolds himself, and a few others. Fanny Burney in her *Life* of her father gives some particulars of these pictures in the Streatham Portrait Gallery; but she was, of course, unable to mention one very interesting point respecting them, which was that that enthusiastic patron of the arts, Mr. Thrale the brewer did not pay for them. He left it to his widow to pay for them, or to maintain the example which he had set her of patronising without paying. But Sir Joshua Reynolds was a good business man as well as a good friend; and between the date of his painting these portraits for Mr. Thrale and the date of Mrs. Thrale's paying for them, his prices had risen, and the lady who was fortunate enough to be Mr. Thrale's widow had to pay at the enhanced rate, amounting in some cases to as much as thirty guineas for one portrait—it was said that Reynolds was becoming quite preposterous in his charges; happily, however, for succeeding generations, his prices if preposterous were not absolutely prohibitive.

At the dispersal of the collection in 1816, the portrait of Goldsmith—it was catalogued "duplicate"—was sold to the Duke of Bedford for £133 7s.—about half the price that one of the mezzotints would fetch in an auction-room to-day.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"THE DESERTED VILLAGE"

1770

WHATEVER explanation an ingenious person may put upon the curious incident of the privately printed editions of the poem which was destined to make the name of the writer known and loved in every part of the civilised world, there can be no doubt that the first appearance of *The Deserted Village* in public was on May 26, 1770. The *Public Advertiser* not merely mentions the day but the hour. "This day at 12 will be published, price two shillings, *The Deserted Village*, a poem. By Doctor Goldsmith, Printed for W. Griffin, at Garrick's Head in Catherine St., Strand." So ran the advertisement. On June 7, a second edition was called for, and a third within another fortnight. A fourth appeared after a lapse of the same duration, and on August 16, a fifth. The success of the book was greater even than that of *The Traveller*, though it did not make such a change in the author's prospects as did the earlier poem. But to say that it merely consolidated his reputation is to say too little. He was acknowledged to be a poet when he published *The Traveller*, and he remained an acknowledged poet when *The Deserted Village* appeared—even that is something satisfactory for a poet to reflect upon, when he has put his second volume into the hands of the people who admired his first so greatly as to make them expect more from the second. Much was expected from the poet of *The Traveller*, and these expectations were more than realised by *The Deserted Village*. Johnson thought that the earlier poem was the better: he had contributed nine lines to the earlier and only four to the latter. But he was undoubtedly honest in his opinion, and it can quite easily be understood that the one should make a stronger appeal to him than the other,

he took into account in forming his judgment so many other things besides the poetry. People usually pronounce an opinion on poetry from the standpoint of poetry only; but Johnson approached it from every side in turn. He would not read a history that was written by an "infidel." He did not believe that a man could write soundly on the Heptarchy unless he was sound on the Pentateuch. He was not quite sure that *The Deserted Village* was not at heart an attack upon the Tory aristocracy.

But there can be no question as to his sincere admiration of the poem as a poem. Any question of preference between the two poems was only a question of preference between the smell of a sweet brier and the scent of a hawthorn.

The breath of the hawthorn pervades *The Deserted Village* —the rain-drenched hawthorn in the early spring, the full summer blossoming of the tree when the air is heavy with perfume and the whole landscape seems to have become one hawthorn bush; and then the harsh biting smell of the winter thorn—we are conscious of it all while reading the poem: the scent of the hawthorn never leaves it. We feel that we have sat with the poet in the shade of the tree in all seasons.

What can be said of the man who could write the words of that dedication? It was inscribed to Sir Joshua Reynolds:

"The only dedication I ever made was to my brother, because I loved him better than most other men. He is since dead. Permit me to inscribe this Poem to you."

It is the most perfect dedication in the English language. It is the only dedication that could be attached to such a poem, and the poem is the only one that could follow such an inscription. Read the words that we have quoted and note the natural hush that follows. We are conscious of having heard an exquisite chord struck, and we pause to allow its vibrations to wane away. They take long. . . . .

Gray had the poem read to him, and before he heard the last line he cried:

"This man is a poet!"

He might have said, "This man is a poet," before his reader had finished the dedication.

The Deserted Village is, perhaps, the most compact poem ever written. It conveys to a reader a sense of the need for every word that it contains. There is no superfluous line in it. We feel that there is nothing of what we may call the "couplet sense" in any part of it—that couplet sense which even under the manipulation of Pope becomes intolerable. It is a study in delicate tones of colour, and we know that they are the tints of Nature in the North: soft sunshine, and a sky dappled with faint grey. There is no sense of weakness in the sweetness of the lines. Their honey does not cloy. They are mellifluous only as flowers are mellifluous. There is no attempt made in this poem any more than there was in its forerunner, to surprise a reader with the aptness of a word—with the expressiveness of a phrase. We feel as we do in looking at a beautiful landscape, that it cannot help being what it is, for it is Nature. We feel that everything about it is true. The poet is not anxious to exhibit his own powers. All he aims at is to draw your attention to the pictures that he sees.

And it is, as we have just said, a series of pictures in low tones that he brings before our eyes. "The sheltered cot," "the cultivated farm," "the never failing brook" "the busy mill," "the decent church that topt the neighb'ring hill," the "smiling village loveliest of the lawn"—all the simplicity of the true pastoral is in the incidents of the landscape, and no artificial note is struck in the people. They are naturally rustic, they are never outside the picture, they are never otherwise than in character—English-speaking people in all departments of life; we cannot get on without them in our literature, our oratory, our daily conversation. They are ever with us. There is scarcely a line in the poem that has not been annexed for daily use, though in using it no thought may be given to its origin.

One has only to glance at a few of these exquisitely simple pictures to become aware of their perfection. The poet imagines a man who has cherished the memory of the places and of their people familiar to his boyhood, returning, after a long separation, to the well-remembered scenes, only to find that all is changed. He meditates on the house that has been left to him desolate:

In all my wand'rings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has giv'n my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting, by repose:
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill;
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt and all I saw;
And as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

The beauty and the deep feeling of the lines have not been surpassed in any English poem; and as to the elements of strong interest in the situation there can be no doubt, any more than there can be as to the good use the author has made of his materials. Every word heightens the impression, and that little suggestion of humour:

I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill;

increases the effect: it is like a sudden gleam of sunshine coming through the dimness of the glade and casting the shadow of a trembling spray on the sward for a moment.

And then how noble is the next passage, and how natural in the sequence of thought:

How blest is he who crowns in shades like these,
A youth of labour with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dang'rous deep;
Nor surly porter stands in guilty state,
To spurn imploring Famine from the gate;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending Virtue's friend;
Sinks to the grave with unperceiv'd decay,
While Resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects bright'ning to the last,
His heaven commences ere the world be past.

Sir Joshua Reynolds at once recognised the pictorial element of the passage. He painted a picture inspired by one line, and called it "Resignation." It was engraved and bore

an inscription: "This attempt to express a character in *The Deserted Village* is dedicated to Doctor Goldsmith by his sincere friend and admirer, Joshua Reynolds."

But there is scarcely a couplet in the poem that does not suggest a picture, or, we may add, that has not been made the subject of one. No poem lends itself so well to illustration. When we read it we are conscious of walking through a gallery of pictures, and the painter of whom we think all the time is Crome, that English artist who was born in the year that the poem was first printed, and who more than any other, had the power of representing the sympathetic significance of a landscape—the living spirit underlying a certain aspect of Nature. It is, indeed, questionable if it would be possible more adequately to illustrate the feeling that pervades this poem than by placing together a number of the existing pictures by John Crome. But, then, should exception be taken to the suggestion that the poem stands in any need of pictorial illustration, we gladly vary our remark and say that it would be impossible to transcribe Crome's landscapes more effectively, more accurately, and more appreciatively than by passages from Goldsmith.

The temptation to pursue this line of thought is great. In this place, however, and in touching briefly upon this poem, we have sufficient temptations to face in the way of quotation from so eminently quotable a work, to prevent our having any desire to encounter new ones that present themselves less directly in our path. It is only necessary to call attention to the similarity of the low-toned charm existing in the works of both these artists, who laboured so conscientiously to the one end through different mediums.

The returned exile moves from spot to spot, revolving many memories of the village as he knew it. He hears again the once familiar sounds—the milkmaid singing, the lowing of the herd, the gabbling geese, the playful children, the watchdog's bark, and the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind—he rehears all, and once again there is an artistic contrast—one solitary figure remains of all—the old woman who gathers watercress at the brook. Then come recollections of the village parson:

Passing rich with forty pounds a year.—

a portrait too familiar to require to be reproduced at this time. He thinks of the schoolmaster, the ale-house and its frequenters, and we have a series of groups, every figure in which stands out clearly and with its own characteristics perfectly depicted; perfect simplicity, perfect naturalness is the note of all. Then there is another effective contrast and an appeal to statesmen to judge

> How wide the limits stand
> Between a splendid and an happy land.

The moralist contends that the increase of the luxury of the few, which, he declares, is at the expense of the many, brings destruction to a state. He paints the horrors of town life and the sadness of emigration, picture following picture until the series culminates in one that is affecting in every touch. He shows the villagers making ready for their departure to another land:

> Good Heaven! What sorrows gloom'd that parting day
> That called them from their native walks away:
> When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
> Hung round the bowers and fondly look'd their last,
> And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
> For seats like these beyond the Western main:
> And shudd'ring still to face the distant deep,
> Return'd and wept, and still return'd to weep.
> The good old sire, the first prepared to go
> To new-found worlds and wept for others' woe;
> But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
> He only wish'd for worlds beyond the grave,
> His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
> The fond companion of his helpless years.
> Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
> And left a lover's for her father's arms.
> With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
> And blest the cot where every pleasure rose;
> And kist her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
> And claspt them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
> Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief,
> In all the silent manliness of grief.
>
> * * *
>
> Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
> That idly waiting, flaps with every gale,
> Downward they move, a melancholy band,
> Pass from the shore and darken all the strand.

All the elements of the sincerest poetry are to be found in this affecting unaffected passage. Every one who has ever witnessed an emigration scene will testify to its accuracy.

A great deal has been written from time to time upon the philosophy, the economics, and the social aspects of *The Deserted Village*. We have been assured that such a wiping out of a whole community as is described in the poem would not be possible even in Ireland and in the eighteenth century. It is said that the one person to whom the author confided the plan of the work, affirmed that Goldsmith had stated that such an incident had actually come within his own experience, though he mentioned no names in this connection—a significant omission. We do not believe that Goldsmith said anything of the sort. But he had imagination enough to be able to picture such an incident, and not only its consequences, but its origin as well.

What seems to us to be most likely is that, in the course of his vagrancy, whether engaged in making a "shoemaker's holiday" through the green country around London, or during his years of rambling in Ireland, he came upon half a dozen cottages in ruins, and learned that they were being demolished because they interfered with the "prospect" from one of the drawing-room windows of a mansion hard at hand; something that happens every day in England and must have happened quite as frequently in the eighteenth century in Ireland, where there was great traffic in mansions, and where the site for a group of cabins was determined by the local supply of mud, without any question as to whether the prospect from the windows of the mansion was marred or not. The exigencies of art required a picturesque record of those who suffered by the demolition of the cabins, and of their sufferings, and the poet proved himself equal to the occasion.

But it is really immaterial whether any such scene of eviction ever took place or not. Surely a poet is not to be debarred from imagining such an occurrence, or from giving a detailed account of the return of a native of the village after many years, hoping and longing to be able to gratify his desire to spend the remainder of his life among the scenes that were familiar to him and that have never left his memory, and of his finding himself face to face with desolation where once

he had known only happiness to dwell. This is all that Goldsmith did. It is not necessary to inquire if the Napper family in Westmeath ever did endeavour to improve their estate by some wholesale evictions, or if Oliver Goldsmith heard about it in his youth; nor does it seem to us to matter in the least if he and his companions came one Sunday morning upon an Islington dairy farm where they had been accustomed to get bowls of milk, and found that the walls of the homestead were being demolished, the paddocks having been bought by the owner of a neighbouring mansion who had been studying too closely the landscape gardening plans of "Capability Brown." Such a disappointment to the party would be talked over with considerable vehemence, we may be sure, and the oppressions of the poor and lowly by the wealthy and arrogant would form the subject of many a bitter word. It does not seem to us to be any more necessary to discuss what foundation the author had for his story of the desertion of the village of Auburn than it is to discuss the source of his story of the desertion of the Wakefield Vicarage by Olivia Primrose. Goldsmith was as fully entitled to write of the one as of the other. We may only remark that it is difficult to see how the arrogance of the wealthy could be gratified by the destruction of the most picturesque village that ever existed. The village has not been sacrificed to any scheme of landscape gardening in connection with the haughty mansion. It has simply been turned into a solitary wilderness, with the hollow sounding bittern (of Lough Ree's sedges) to recall the desolate places through which an earlier poet walked. As to what scheme of wealthy arrogance could be gratified by such a work of wanton destruction, we should like some further information if we were prepared to discuss the economic features of the poem.

But the social history of England, and that of the United States of America as well, afford us a good deal of food for consideration in connection with the sentiment of the striking passage:

> Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay;
> Princes and lords may flourish or may fade;
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroy'd can never be supplied.

These fine lines do more than merely suggest that Goldsmith foresaw some of the most difficult problems of the twentieth century, just as he foresaw the approach of the French Revolution when the sagest of philosophers prophesied only peace and safety. The tyranny of trade which Goldsmith foresaw in England, with its attendant evils of plethoric towns and anæmic rural villages, has been felt all over England —in America it has become intolerable—within the past quarter of a century; but so far as we recollect, no one—even in America—anxious for a healthier condition of things, has looked for its approach as Goldsmith did, through the medium of poetry. Poetry he foresaw emigrating to America, of all places in the world, and in his invocation to that

> Dear charming nymph, neglected and decry'd,

he entreats her to

> Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain;
> Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
> Teach him, that states of native strength possest
> Though very poor, may still be very blest.

That is the message which he entreated Poetry to carry across the Atlantic! It may have been delivered; but speaking frankly, we do not think that its delivery has been so efficacious as the poet could have wished. The rage of gain is not universally spurned in the land to which he sent his message, and among the blessings which the people there acknowledge, without reluctance, that they enjoy, poverty does not take a particularly prominent place.

Respecting the identity of the village which he called Auburn much has been written. In many directions the village of Lissoy has been accepted as the model which the poet had before him, and a hawthorn tree which, in common with almost every village in central Ireland, was straggling across the end of its little street, was carried away twig by twig mainly by the loving hands of those who had heard the message in America. The decent church that topt the neighb'ring hill, would no doubt also have been carried off by the same agencies of destructive homage, but for the fact of its being very firmly fixed. Had they found the veteran schoolmaster in his place they would doubtless have torn him limb by limb and sent a

bone as a memento of the poet to every museum throughout the country. But the homage of those enthusiasts who seem to believe that the best way of honouring a poet is to materialise everything that he imagined, proves nothing. The alteration of the name of the village on the maps to Auburn is also unconvincing to any one who doubts if Goldsmith had only Lissoy in his mind when he wrote the poem. Sixty years ago a person anxious to settle the question for ever, restored the ale-house, and furnished it exactly in accordance with the inventory contained in the poem, down to the tea cups which were duly cracked (*vide* schedule) but securely fastened to the board to defy memento thieves. There was, however, considerable difficulty about the rules for the Royal game of Goose, which were not easily forthcoming; and as for the nightingale—well, the place of the absent nightingale could only be taken, upon important occasions, by a boy with a couple of quills and a glass of water, but the water was doubtless taken from the actual brook, so that really nothing worth speaking of was lacking; for we are sure that if the gabbling geese were not forthcoming, the omission would never be noticed, if tourists only came in sufficient numbers.

And then a clergyman in England wrote to prove that Auburn was several other places, and he was probably right; and Lord Macaulay wrote to prove that it never existed, and he was probably right too—in one sense.

Now any one who has visited Central Ireland and become acquainted with the type of the villages to be found in that region, will agree with us in thinking that the trim Auburn could not possibly have ever been among these. A straggling street of thirty or forty houses, ill kept and plentifully puddled, with no evidence of a desire for cleanliness or tidiness—that is the typical Irish village of to-day, as every one knows. (We have already referred to the origin of this attempt to put as poor a face on things as possible.) That was the Irish village with which Goldsmith was acquainted; but it is equally certain that it was Lissoy he had in his mind when he drew the picture of Auburn. Time and a poet's mind are the greatest refiners in existence, and that which comes under the influence of both let none call common or unclean. Goldsmith was a poet, not what is exactly the opposite to a poet—a

realistic painter. The picture of the village which suited the scheme of his poem was actually a picture of Lissoy in no respect except its topography. Time had obliterated from his memory every trace of the squalid, and the poet's imagination did the rest. The picture that was in the poet's mind necessitated the notes of nightingale, and he was so conscientious a poet that he was bound to introduce a grove of nightingales. It was never his intention to re-build Lissoy; but, like the tourists whom he brought into existence, he carried off as many mementoes of Lissoy as suited his own purposes.

The question of the identification of the various topographical features of Auburn is really not worth longer consideration than the question of the origin of the name, which, it may be mentioned, was exactly the same as the origin of the name Holborn. Goldsmith had heard of Aldbourne (pronounced Auburn) as the name of a village near Salisbury, and he was attracted by its sound; and Aldbourne was, like Holborn, a corruption of Old Bourne. But the question of the identity of certain of the persons in Auburn is undoubtedly an interesting one. It does not seem to have occurred to any of his friends to put a few direct questions to him on this subject. The identity of the various characters in Dryden's *Absolom and Achitophel* was established at once; and no one was left long in doubt as to the originals of the finely drawn characters in the couplets of Pope's satires; but no letter of Goldsmith's written to his brothers or his sisters in Ireland, or, indeed, to any of his friends, refers to his intention to make an attempt to draw the character in his poem of his father or his dead brother or the schoolmaster. The only solid link that binds Henry Goldsmith to the clergyman in *The Deserted Village* is that forty pounds a year. Here we feel that we have an identification clue that may be worth something; and when we find that not only had Henry Goldsmith this particular income, but that his father had it for thirteen years of his life, we have no reason to feel in difficulties; all we have to do is to assume that the character of the parson was, like the piece of furniture in the inn, meant to discharge a double duty: it was at once the character of the father, the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, and of his son, the

REMAINS OF THE GOLDSMITHS' HOUSE AT LISSOY.

From a photograph by W. Swanston.

Reverend Henry Goldsmith. It is a happy thing when two good men can be brought under the benign influence of the one consecration. The tablet which was erected by the son of the one and the brother of the other, remains to-day sacred to the memory of Charles and Henry Goldsmith. It is a monument more enduring than brass, and it will cease to enshrine their virtues only when the English language shall cease to be read.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XXIX

A HOLIDAY IN FRANCE

1770

SCARCELY had the second edition of *The Deserted Village* appeared when the *Life of Parnell* was published by Davies. The memoir is the merest sketch; but it is full of sound criticism, and its importance was increased through being made the medium for the publication of some very characteristic letters of Pope—whose trickery Goldsmith detected and exposed—of Gay and of Arbuthnot. The references to the celebrated Scribblerus Club are excellent. "It is past a doubt that they wrote many things in conjunction, and Gay usually held the pen. And yet I do not remember any productions," wrote Goldsmith, "which were the joint effort of this Society, as doing it honour. There is something feeble and quaint in all their attempts, as if company repressed thought, and genius wanted solitude for its boldest and happiest exertions." The same impression must have been produced upon many other readers of the "scribblerus" papers. But Goldsmith perceived that the great value of this memoir was the excuse that it gave for the publication of the letters from Pope. "As they have never before appeared," he says, "it is probable the reader will be much better pleased with their idle effusions than with anything I can hammer out for his amusement."

But though he looked on this work in its proper light, as a mere sketch, it was accounted by Johnson so good that he did not wish to introduce Parnell among his own *Lives of the Poets*, produced some years later. According to Boswell, on the appearance of Goldsmith's sketch, Johnson thought very poorly of it. But Johnson seems to have changed his mind about it, for in referring to it in his *Lives of the Poets*,

he wrote: "The life of Dr. Parnell is a task which I should very willingly decline, since it has been lately written by Goldsmith, a man of such variety of powers, and such felicity of performance, that he always seemed to do best that which he was doing, and a man who had the art of being minute without tediousness, whose language was copious without exuberance, exact without constraint, and easy without weakness. What such an author has told who would tell again? I have made an abstract from his larger narrative, and have this gratification from my attempt that it gives me an opportunity of paying due tribute to the memory of Goldsmith."

Moreover, the sales were so good that Davies commissioned him to do a little more of this "hammering out" in the form of a *Life of Bolingbroke* to be prefixed to a new edition of his *Dissertation*. The merits of this work are not very conspicuous. He found that St. John was a good deal more malleable than Parnell, and he carried out the process too thoroughly. The result is a thinness of metal, and withal not gold leaf, and too many markings of the hammer. The truth is that there was very little incident in Parnell's career, and thus it lent itself very well to treatment in a sketch; but Bolingbroke's life was far too overflowing to allow of its being dealt with in the same style. Here and there throughout the pages of the memoir, however, we find a trenchant criticism and a shrewd remark.

But he certainly detested the work; and one can well believe that he neglected the proofs when they came to him for correction, causing Davies to wring his hands in despair.

What he received for these things is as open to conjecture as the amount paid to him for *The Deserted Village*. Regarding the latter Cooke states that Griffin bought it for £100; but that Goldsmith, finding after a brief calculation that this would work out at something about five shillings a couplet, returned a portion of the money, saying that no poem was worth that money. This story was doubted at the time, but reiterated by Cooke. It may still be true, for with Goldsmith and a sum of money in juxtaposition one never knows what is going to happen. But is it likely that Griffin would, contrary to agreement, advance him £500 on a work

which he had scarcely more than begun, and then pay him, also in advance, at the rate of five shillings a couplet, for a poem.? Surely it is much more reasonable to think that the poem was offered as a consideration for the generous advance made in respect of *Animated Nature?* This is what we believe actually happened. Such an advance as £500—the price of five out of the eight volumes stipulated for—would never have been made by the bookseller at great inconvenience to himself unless for some consideration. Goldsmith wanted the £500; and he bribed Griffin with the poem to let him have the sum. But after all this is only the merest conjecture. It is, however, necessary to account for two things: (1) the magnitude of the advance contrary to the terms of the agreement, on a long work that was scarcely begun, and (2) the absence of any agreement respecting the publication of the poem.

As for Cooke's story, all that an unprejudiced critic would say after hearing it is that an author who had no scruples over drawing £500 on a book which he knew would take him years to write—especially if he intended to write it conjointly with an equally important work for another publisher—would have no scruple over putting into his pocket so small a sum as that £100 which Cooke said he received and of which he returned a portion. Goldsmith over money matters had no more conscience than a boy over bird-nesting.

He had need of some ready money now. He had just seen his Parnell memoir through the press when he joined his friends the Hornecks, mother and daughters, on a trip to France; and we know from the nature of the letter he wrote to Percy on the subject of occupying his Vicarage, that he was not the man to sponge on his friends. A portion of the letter which he wrote to Reynolds on landing at Calais was published by Percy, and this shows in what an excellent humour he was. No doubt there had been a good deal of children's fun on the way to Dover and aboard the packet. No doubt the girls had read the poem of which all their friends were talking, and believing that all the world was talking of it, they felt proud of being on such excellent terms with the author as allowed of their taunting him with having written those lines about the melancholy of the "long pomp" and

"the midnight masquerade," when all the time he had been appearing in the most gorgeous of garments at these vain and unsatisfying entertainments; and no doubt he replied gravely that he had only gone to these wicked places in order that he might learn how sad they were and so deter others from going. His reference to his invention for a machine to prevent sea-sickness, suggests some former jest made by him, probably at Sir Joshua's own table.

He wrote from the Hotel d'Angleterre, at Calais:

"My dear friend, we had a very quick passage from Dover to Calais, which we performed in three hours and twenty minutes, all of us extremely sea-sick, which must necessarily have happened, as my machine to prevent sea-sickness was not completed. We were glad to leave Dover, because we hated to be imposed upon; so were in high spirits at coming to Calais, where we were told that a little money would go a great way. Upon landing two little trunks, which was all we carried with us, we were surprised to see fourteen or fifteen fellows all running down to the ship to lay their hands upon them; four got under each trunk, the rest surrounded, and held the hasps; and in this manner our little baggage was conducted, with a kind of funeral solemnity, till it was safely lodged at the custom-house. We were well enough pleased with the people's civility till they came to be paid: when every creature that had the happiness of but touching our trunks with their finger, expected sixpence; and had so pretty civil a manner of demanding it, that there was no refusing them. When we had done with the porters, we had next to speak with the custom-house officers, who had their pretty civil way too. We were directed to the Hotel d'Angleterre, where a *valet de place* came to offer his service: and spoke to me ten minutes before I once found out that he was speaking English. We had no occasion for his service, so we gave him a little money because he spoke English, and because he wanted it. I cannot help mentioning another circumstance. I bought a new ribbon for my wig at Canterbury, and the barber at Calais broke it in order to gain sixpence by buying me a new one."

It was when they reached Lille on their way to Paris,

passing no doubt over the route which he had once traversed in a very different style, that the incident of the officers looking up to the girls in the window occurred, calling for Goldsmith's indignation at the want of taste on the part of the military which caused them to ignore him.

Another delightful letter to Reynolds, written from Paris, shows that he was taking but too good care of his friends, quarrelling with those who attempted to cheat them, and getting between them and the rapacity of the lodging-house keepers. Very mournful, however, are his reflections at the changes effected by a few years. On his former journeying in France and Flanders he had never been in the least troubled by these things.

"My dear Friend, I began a long letter to you from Lille giving a description of all that we had done and seen, but finding it very dull, and knowing that you would show it again, I threw it aside and it was lost. You see by the top of this letter that we are at Paris, and (as I have often heard you say) we have brought our own amusement with us, for the ladies do not seem to be very fond of what we have yet seen.

"With regard to myself I find that travelling at twenty and at forty are very different things. I set out with all my confirmed habits about me, and can find nothing on the Continent so good as when I formerly left it. One of our chief amusements here is scolding at everything we meet with, and praising every thing and every person we left at home. You may judge therefore whether your name is not frequently bandied at table among us. To tell you the truth I never thought I could regret your absence so much as our various mortifications on the road have often taught me to do. I could tell you of disasters and adventures without number, of our lying in barns, and of my being half-poisoned with a dish of green peas, of our quarrelling with postilions and being cheated by our landladies, but I reserve all this for an happy hour which I expect to share with you upon my return.

"I have little to tell you more, but that we are at present all well, and expect returning when we have staid out one month, which I should not care if it were over this very day. I long to hear from you all: how you yourself do, how Johnson,

Burke, Dyer, Chamier, Colman, and every one of the Club do. I wish I could send you some amusement in this letter, but I protest I am so stupified by the air of this country (for I am sure it can never be natural) that I have not a word to say. I have been thinking of the plot of a comedy which shall be entitled *A Journey to Paris*, in which a family shall be introduced with a full intention of going to France to save money. You know there is not a place in the world more promising for that purpose. As for the meat of this country I can scarce eat it, and though we pay two good shillings an head for our dinner, I find it all so tough, that I have spent less time with my knife than my pick-tooth. I said this as a good thing at table, but it was not understood. I believe it to be a good thing.

"As for our intended journey to Devonshire, I find it out of my power to perform it, for, as soon as I arrive at Dover I intend to let the ladies go on, and I will take a country lodging somewhere near that place in order to do some business. I have so outrun the constable, that I must mortify a little to bring it up again. For God's sake the night you receive this take your pen in your hand and tell me something about yourself, and *my*self, if you know of anything that has happened. About Miss Reynolds, about Mr. Bickerstaff, my nephew, or anybody that you regard. I beg you will send to Griffin the bookseller to know if there be any letters left for me, and to be so good as to send them to me at Paris. They may perhaps be left for me at the porter's lodge opposite the pump in Temple-lane. The same messenger will do. I expect one from Lord Clare from Ireland. As for others I am not much uneasy about them.

"Is there anything I can do for you at Paris? I wish you would tell me. The whole of my own purchases here, is one silk coat which I have put on, and which makes me look like a fool. But no more of that. I find that Colman has gained his lawsuit. I am glad of it. I suppose you often meet. I will soon be among you, better pleased with my situation at home than I ever was before. And yet I must say, that if anything could make France pleasant, the very good women with whom I am at present would certainly do it. I could say more about that, but I intend showing them this letter

before I send it away. What signifies teazing you longer with moral observations when the business of my writing is over. I have one thing only more to say, and of that I think every hour in the day, namely, that I am your

"Most sincere and most affectionate friend,

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"Direct to me at the Hotel de Danemarc,"
"Rue Jacob, Fauxbourg St. Germains."

Only a few other anecdotes resulted from this tour. One was probably told by a man named Hickey about Goldsmith's having jumped into the basin of one of the fountains at Versailles while endeavouring to prove that it was not within leaping distance—a foolish trivial thing. The narrator might as well have told of his getting a splash of mud on his stockings. But from a different source we hear of his shaking his head on Mrs. Horneck's proposing when they found themselves on a Sunday morning in some place where there was no English chaplain, that he should read the Service to them. "I should be happy to oblige you, dear madam," was his reply, "but in truth I do not think myself good enough."

Readers are at liberty to come to any conclusion they please as to his meaning.

But one outcome of this French visit was an observation in *Animated Nature* respecting the accuracy of the pronunciation of French parrots which are taught in France, and the slovenliness in pronouncing English by birds taught in England. It would be interesting to learn if Garrick, who was an authority on the talk of "poor Poll," had noticed this difference between the two schools of elocution.

His return to England was rather melancholy. He had when in Paris heard of the death of his mother in Ireland.

CHAPTER XXX

WORK AND PLAY

1770—1771

His holiday had lasted a little over six weeks. The booksellers grudged him every day of it, and on the best possible grounds. Taking the most indulgent view of his work they must have reckoned it as being about two years in arrear. But only now and again did Goldsmith seem to have any qualms. He had schooled himself—without any great severity of discipline—into the feeling that when he had received a substantial advance for any work, he had got over the most troublesome part of the transaction, and could afford to be negligent. As an exponent of the complete art of negligence he was unsurpassed in the annals of authorship; though, as we have already said, taking his last five years' work in the aggregate, it represents rather more than a very industrious writer would produce. But his way was to have alternate orgies of industry and idleness; and when he was indulging in one of the latter, Messrs. Davies, Griffin, Newbery and the rest who attended to their shops daily from seven in the morning until eight at night, shook their heads and held up their hands.. . They despaired of him.

He had now on hand the *History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, which, according to his agreement of the previous year (Feb. 1769) was to be in eight volumes and "written immediately"; and the *History of England*, which was to be in four, and completed within two years from June 13 in the same year. He must have made considerable progress with the latter when he returned from France, for the four volumes were actually published within a year from that date. But in spite of his arrears and of his having his hands quite full, he did not hesitate to sign an agreement for the Abridge-

ment of his *Roman History*, and even so unbusinesslike a man as Goldsmith must have seen the importance of pushing forward this particular work while the original was still being talked about and before some one else should carry out so promising a scheme.

But, as usual, he signed his agreement with a heart as light as his pen, and then, stuffing the proofs of his *Memoir of Bolingbroke* into his trunk, he set off to visit his friend Lord Clare at Gosfield. The nature of this visit and its duration testify to the cordiality of the relations existing between Lord Clare and himself. The former had just suffered the greatest bereavement that could have fallen upon him. His only son, Robert Nugent, had died a short time before, and he begged Goldsmith to come to him at Gosfield as soon as he could get away. And just as Gibbon hurried away from Lausanne to be by the side of Lord Sheffield on hearing of the death of Lady Sheffield, Goldsmith made haste to reach his friend. He was a sympathetic companion. Only a few weeks had passed since the news of his own bereavement had reached him, and though he had not seen his mother for nearly twenty years, there can be no doubt that he had a sense of sorrow at the breaking of another link between him and his old home.

He remained with Lord Clare, and as Lady Buckingham, Lord Clare's only daughter, was able to testify years afterwards, he was the means of restoring cheerfulness to the household. In October (1770) Davies complained to Dr. Grainger that he could not get the proofs of the Bolingbroke sketch, the author not having sent them back from Gosfield; and in the early months of the new year he was still there, but at the point of setting out for Bath, where he was the Clares' guest for a further period.

And as the joining together of these periods brings us well into the spring of this year, consequently eight or nine months after the death of his mother, during which space he was never once in London, the utter groundlessness of the story of his appearing at Reynolds's house in second mourning, when his mother had just died, is apparent, even without the need of Filby's books to prove that he went into complete mourning.

We have the evidence of Percy for a characteristic story of one of the poet's little accidents during his stay at Bath. Going out for a stroll before breakfast one morning he returned as he thought to Lord Clare's house, walked upstairs and seated himself on a sofa in one of the rooms, where he found the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, apparently waiting for breakfast to be served. He found that they were quite polite, and they conversed together until the servants entered with breakfast. It was only when they had most civilly invited him to join them that he became aware of the fact that he had not returned to Lord Clare's house but had entered another beside it, the occupants of which were the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. He was naturally overwhelmed with confusion; but he was assured that no apology on his part was necessary.

Of course no apology was necessary. The houses on each parade in Bath so closely resemble one another that such a mistake as Goldsmith's must have been made scores of times.

This story may certainly be accepted; and so perhaps—with some reserve—may be another, which is also illustrative of his absent-mindedness, if of little else. It was printed by Croker in his edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and was told to him by an Irishman named O'Moore, a good many years after the incident to which it refers was said to have occurred. O'Moore said that he was going with Burke to dine with Reynolds when they passed through a crowd who were about a hotel where some foreign ladies were displaying themselves rather conspicuously. Goldsmith was a short way behind Burke, also on his way to Sir Joshua's; and on arriving at the house, Burke, who was always ready for a practical joke, gravely taxed Goldsmith with having said out loud in the middle of the crush, "What stupid beasts these people are for staring with such admiration at those painted Jezebels, while a man of my talents passed by unnoticed!" "Surely, surely, my dear friend," cried Goldsmith, "I did not say so." "But if you had not said so, how could I have known it?" said Burke. "True," said Goldsmith. "Well, I am very sorry. It was very foolish. I do recollect that something of the kind passed through my mind, but I did not think I had uttered it."

It must not be forgotten that this story came from the accommodating memory of the Irish Colonel O'Moore, and was narrated by the accommodating pen of Croker.

It was while he was at Gosfield that he received what some of his biographers have tried to make out was a serious wound to his vanity—on the authority (as usual) of Boswell; for Lord Camden had called one day, and treated him with coldness. "He took no more notice of me," said Goldsmith, with well-simulated bitterness, "than if I had been an ordinary man!" He was in a mixed company, Johnson and Boswell and others being present; and at this they all burst out laughing. Goldsmith had scored and every one knew it except Boswell. One can see the picture of this scene as plainly as one can see the picture in the hotel at Lille, where no doubt there was an outburst of laughter when the little man who was so well aware of his plainness and awkwardness, affirmed that he had his admirers. "He took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man!" he cried indignantly, and the more the people about him laughed the graver his face would become, while he looked round from one to the other in the group, pretending to wonder what they were laughing at. The Irish humour of his attitude is so apparent that one cannot help joining in the laugh. And it was in appreciation of his humour that Johnson declared that Doctor Goldsmith did well to be indignant. "A nobleman," he affirmed, "ought to have made up to such a man as Goldsmith; and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him." From what we learn of Johnson, not through such a medium as Boswell, but from Fanny Burney, we have every reason to feel certain that he appreciated Goldsmith's humour, and backed it up. It is only when a man is uncertain of his position that he complains of not having proper deference shown to him, and even then only by his inferiors. Even if Goldsmith had walked out of the Wednesday Club room at the Globe tavern when the pork butcher varied his familiarity of "Nolly" by "Noll," he would scarcely have shown himself to be the man to be taken seriously when he complained that he had been shamefully neglected by Lord Camden.

He was in London in time for the first of the Annual Dinners of the Royal Academy, on St. George's Day this year

(1771). Here he had a chance of making an enemy of a man who was one of the most contemptible of the notabilities of his time—the type of the dilettante and the literary exquisite that has ever been the most odious of the race. Gossip and slanderer of men and women, and sneerer at everything of good in man and woman, Horace Walpole forms a contrast to Oliver Goldsmith—the artistic contrast that exists between a highly finished mannikin and a man. There was nothing natural about Horace Walpole—even his gait was formed upon a French dancing-master's idea of the mincing of Agag, King of the Amalakites. We look at his portrait and see him standing on his toes, raising his eyebrows with the supercilious leer while he insists on his cicerone repeating his information that the little man with the protruding upper lip is Doctor Goldsmith. He was the sort of man who would go to the Royal Academy banquet and assume from the moment he entered the room that it was given in his honour.

He was near enough to Johnson and Goldsmith to hear their conversation. It was on the subject of some poems in manuscript which had some time before been found in a chest in St. Mary, Redcliffe, Bristol, and were said to be the work of one Rowley, a priest who lived in the fifteenth century. Dr. Goldsmith was affirming his belief in the authenticity of the poems, and announcing his admiration for them, and Johnson was laughing at his eagerness. But it was a literary question, and Goldsmith was able to hold his own on any literary question, though he possibly was as ignorant as Johnson on the subject of fifteenth century caligraphy. This was the moment for the supreme arbiter to interpose. Forgeries, he cried, all forgeries! The perpetrator of the fraud had done him the honour to offer him the first chance of giving them to the world; but he had detected the fraud at once and had declined to allow his name to be associated with such a thing. We know perfectly well how Walpole could play the *rôle* of the supercilious delicately critical *virtuoso*—the *arbiter elegantiarum*, whose literary work was so precious, so exquisite—that the very thought of the manuscript going into the hands of a common printer was unsupportable and compelled him to set up a

press of his own. But we also know how Goldsmith could play the part of literary man with self-respect enough to turn a powerful minister's emissary out of his room when he came to propose the subsidising of his pen for the support of a party; and knowing this, we may be sure that he did not spare the man who, he now knew, had sent Chatterton to his death. It was Goldsmith who made him aware of the sequel to his trifling with the Rowley manuscripts which had been offered to him by the boy Chatterton from Bristol—of the scene of the starvation which Goldsmith had arrived too late to avert—the body of the youth lying white among the myriad white fragments of manuscript which he had snowed around the room before taking the poison.

Walpole was shocked by the tidings; but knowing that no one would believe that he was capable of any feeling, in the paper describing this incident at the dinner, he felt it necessary to add that his own word to this effect would be attested by "the persons of honour and veracity who were present" upon that occasion.

But incredulous of his sincerity though a good many of his friends might be—their incredulity being in proportion to the intimacy of their acquaintance with him—we cannot doubt for a moment that he was affected by Goldsmith's recital of the story. The way Cleopatra ordered the man who brought to her ears the tidings of the marriage of Mark Antony carries with it conviction of the sincerity of her feeling on the subject. Not a good word had Walpole to say of Goldsmith or Goldsmith's works after this episode. The reflection of having been shocked out of his mask of exquisite artificiality by such a lout as Goldsmith must have been very galling to him.

The part that Walpole played in respect of Chatterton is in keeping with the *rôle* he habitually assumed. It was like him to be greatly amused at the warmth of Doctor Goldsmith in maintaining his belief in the forgeries which he, Walpole, might have had the honour of making public; but supposing that Doctor Goldsmith had said he would abandon the question of forgery or not forgery and simply stand by the question of poetry or not poetry, how would Walpole reply? Was the author of *The Castle of Otranto*

the man to hold up his hands in pious horror at the thought of an attempt to impose upon the public by pretending that a modern work was an ancient one?

Every one knows nowadays that if Walpole had had anything of the feeling of the true patron of literature—the true protector of the literary worker, he would have held out a helping hand to the boy who had entrusted his Rowley poems to his care; and, perceiving that the boy was only following the example set to him by the author of the forged *Castle of Otranto*, and was trying to obtain the ear of the public by the same device as that author had adopted, would have said to him: "You have written poems in which genius of an extraordinary character may be recognised in every line, and I will stand sponsor for them to mark my appreciation of their value." Had he written to Chatterton to this effect—and he had a chance of doing it—posterity would not hold him morally accountable for the death of a boy who wrote such poetry as never was written in the world by any one of the same age.

But the truth is that the supercilious *arbiter elegantiarum* of Strawberry Hill was as incapable of judging whether the Rowley manuscripts possessed any literary value as he was of judging whether they possessed any archæological value. If he had seen through the fraud at once, as he suggested, with smiles and shrugs, that he did, why did he not return the manuscripts at once? No, he waited for Gray and Mason to smile at the attempt to pass them off as genuine; and even then he did not return them until the poet had written an urgent letter. Then, having heard that his correspondent was a young man in very humble circumstances, he had no difficulty in perceiving how valueless they were; nor had he any trouble in coming to the conclusion that Oliver Goldsmith was an extremely vulgar and uncouth person when Oliver Goldsmith had expressed himself pretty freely in his hearing on the subject of the treatment of Chatterton.

But Walpole was avenged before the distinguished guests had separated upon this very interesting occasion, and Goldsmith was put into his proper place. At one end of the table late in the evening the conversation seems to have been rapid and mixed. Johnson of course was there, and so was Goldsmith; a short distance off was Moser, the Swiss, who had

been appointed Keeper of the Academy. The last named seemed to possess that unfortunate trait of his countrymen in being extremely impolite without meaning it. "Hush, hush!" he shouted, "the Toctor is going to say something." Dr. Goldsmith was amazed to find that the road was being cleared for him. "No, no," shrieked Moser, "it is not you, but the great Toctor, I mean."

This was not the first time that the lesser doctor was made to know his place.

He had, however, quite recovered from the effects of this nasty blow within a few weeks, for we find him writing to Lord Clare to acknowledge the safe arrival and to describe the subsequent adventures of a certain haunch of venison which his lordship had sent to him. The high spirits which gallop through the verses of that delightful piece of such fooling as Goldsmith loved, are hardly conformable with a sense of mortification due to Moser's snub.

The *Haunch of Venison* is one of the most famous *jeux d'esprit* ever written; but the author threw it off without apparently a second thought, mentioning it to nobody and keeping no copy of it. But Lord Clare found the verses so full of the sparkle of wit and the dash of humour that he passed them round among his friends, and when the author found that he was doing so he asked for the original so that he might make it better worth circulating. He made only a few changes, however, and these quite trifling. Of course, reading them now we lose all the value of the "topical" allusions. But the Clare circle must have been more diverted by these than by the description of the dinner where the Venison was not. Nothing could surely be neater than the reference to the famous Dolly Monroe, the Irish beauty, who had so captivated Townshend; to the Scotch party parson Scott; to the phrase made use of by the Duke of Cumberland in one of those love letters to Lady Grosvenor which had just been published—"nobody with me at sea but myself!" But the whole piece shows a delicate finish which is rarely to be found associated with so laughable a performance. And what seems to us to be one of its most interesting features is the impression of probability that it conveys. It is exactly like what we would expect to happen to Goldsmith; and the impudent visitor

who carries off the haunch is just the sort of person that might have been found in his rooms—an artistic blend of Lofty, Beau Tibbs and the gentleman from Ireland who had the consignment of white mice for a lady of quality.

But Goldsmith was not always so unfortunate in picking up an acquaintance. It was in this year (1771) that two law students of the Temple were introduced to him and entertained by him. One of them was a youth of nineteen, named Henry Grattan, and the other was Robert Day, who is less remembered as a judge on the Irish bench than Grattan was as a far-seeing patriotic statesman—a man of genius and of eloquence only second to that of Burke. Goldsmith became a constant visitor at Grattan's rooms in Essex Court, and Day treasured to the end of his life the memory of his early friendship for the author of *The Deserted Village*.

It can easily be believed, however, that at this time he laid himself open to even a greater extent than in his earlier years in London, to the wiles of impostors, ready to prey upon him, in the absence of a haunch of venison to divert their attention. The way he made the acquaintance of a young man named McDonnell, who afterwards became a well-known physician, was narrated by the young man himself. It enables one to see without much trouble how easy it was to impose upon him. He laid himself out to be imposed upon. He seemed to feel that it was better that he should befriend a score of impostors rather than run the chance of neglecting some deserving man. McDonnell was accidentally left in London in a most forlorn condition. He had just arrived from France and had no money to pay for his journey to Ireland, and no friends from whom he could borrow it. He strolled by good luck into the Temple Gardens and tried to forget his condition by reading a book which he had brought with him.

"I had not been there long," he wrote in after years, "when a gentleman, strolling about passed near me, and observing, perhaps, something Irish or foreign in my garb or countenance, addressed me: 'Sir, you seem studious; I hope you find this a favourable place to pursue it.' 'Not very studious, sir; I fear it is the want of society that brings me hither; I am solitary and unknown in this metropolis';

and a passage from Cicero—*Oratio pro Archia*—occurring to me, I quoted it: '*Haec studia pronoctant nobiscum, perigrinantur, rusticantur.*' 'You are a scholar, too, sir, I perceive.' 'A piece of one, sir; but I ought still to have been in the college where I had the good fortune to pick up the little I know.' A good deal of conversation ensued; I told him part of my history, and he, in return, gave his address in the Temple, desiring me to call soon, from which, to my infinite surprise and gratification, I found that the person who thus seemed to take an interest in my fate was my countryman, and a distinguished ornament of letters.

"I did not fail to keep the appointment, and was received in the kindest manner. He told me smilingly, that he was not rich; that he could do little for me in direct pecuniary aid, but would endeavour to put me in the way of doing something for myself; observing, that he could at least furnish me with advice not wholly useless to a young man placed in the heart of a great metropolis. 'In London,' he continued, 'nothing is to be got for nothing: you must work; and no man who chooses to be industrious need be under obligations to another, for here labour of every kind commands its reward. If you think proper to assist me occasionally as amanuensis, I shall be obliged, and you will be placed under no obligation, until something more permanent can be secured for you.' This employment, which I pursued for some time, was to translate passages from Buffon, which was abridged or altered, according to circumstances, for his *Natural History*."

He had made considerable progress with the *Animated Nature* when this interesting incident took place; but he cannot have gone far with it at the time he was visiting Lord Clare, and he certainly did not make any advance with the work commensurate with the advances made to him by Griffin during the spring in London. He was fully occupied over the proof sheets of his *History of England*, taking care, however, not to neglect Vauxhall or Ranelagh for the sake of the printers. Judge Day testified to his fidelity to the attractions of both these places of polite resort, and also to his final abandonment of all traces of the scholar in his costume—they were never very great since his early years in London—and

his adoption of the bagwig and sword of the gentlemen of fashion. He seems to have worn the latter with some uneasiness, if we are to credit the story of his awkwardness being mimicked by two strangers in the street one day. They suggested that he was like a fly transfixed by a pin. He retorted with equal breadth of metaphor by warning the people in the street that they were pickpockets in disguise, and seeing that they did not resent his idiom, he seemed to think that he would be quite safe in offering them a challenge. He laid his hand upon his sword and invited them to draw. But he was right in assuming that the men who do not draw on being called pickpockets will still refrain even though challenged in the middle of a street of suspicious passengers. They slunk away followed by the jeers of the crowd.

He had to adopt the same attitude in regard to the infamous Kenrick a short time afterwards, for Goldsmith having become a sufficiently important person in the world of fashion to have his name included in the newspaper list of notabilities present at a masquerade, Kenrick had written a lampoon on the incident—a foolish, pointless thing, as one may judge from the initial couplet:

> How widely different, Goldsmith, are the ways
> Of Doctors now and those of ancient days!

The stuff had not even grammar to make it readable; but the malicious and insolent intention was in every line; and when Goldsmith next came upon him in a coffee-house he walked straight up to him and demanded an immediate apology. He had not mistaken his man this time either. Kenrick publicly dissociated himself from the libellous lines, and from the sentiments they embodied. With this equivalent to an apology Goldsmith left the coffee house; but when he was well out of the way, the cowardly rascal Kenrick began to ridicule him in one of those harangues in which he so frequently indulged in tavern parlours.

The cowardliness of the same man is shown in one of Garrick's letters to him. "Sir," wrote the actor, "I would have honoured you by giving you the satisfaction of a gentleman if you could (as Shakespeare says) have screwed your courage to the sticking place to have taken it."

No, there was no danger that such a person as Kenrick would draw his sword openly. The poisoned poniard had too long been his weapon to allow of his changing it, even for the sake of giving his vindicators a chance of making a solitary entry to his credit as a gentleman. He remained a stabber to the end of his life.

But quite apart from anything that Kenrick had to say on the subject, Goldsmith was fully aware of the unsatisfying and unsatisfactory nature of the entertainments in which he was indulging. Had he not referred to the demoralising effects of the "midnight masquerade" in *The Deserted Village?* Now and again he had more than a poet's conviction of their worthlessness. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had now become almost a daily companion of his, entered his room one afternoon without waiting to be announced, and found him actively engaged in kicking a bundle from wall to wall. On being questioned by his visitor, he at once explained that he had been so much ashamed of the money he had spent over these masquerades that he had determined to have nothing more to do with them, but in order that the money should not be wholly wasted, he had converted his last gala suit into a ball which, as a medium of healthy exercise, could scarcely be surpassed.

He probably went to a masquerade that very night.

It was not such entertainments as these that were working to his detriment. He had got into a habit of card-playing, which, to a man of his temperament, was the most fatal to his comfort and his prospects that he could possibly have acquired. In Ireland he had once, it will be remembered, thrown away a large sum entrusted to him for his legal education, by a single night at the card table; and he had been equally imprudent at Leyden. He was an extremely poor player of all games of cards; and like a good many indifferent performers, he rather fancied himself as an exponent of the game, and was inclined to abuse his luck, holding it accountable for his repeated losses. It was this weakness of his that kept him down in these prosperous years. What with reckless beneficence on the one hand and reckless behaviour at the card table on the other hand, he was the despair of himself as well as of his best friends.

His necessities becoming greater every day and his responsibilities continuing to increase, he tore himself away from the fatal allurements of the town and hurried off to a lodging which he had taken in a farm on the Edgware Road, where he intended to resume his labour at *Animated Nature*—a task the sheer weight of which was pressing upon him. But the hope of getting a quantity of money quickly, and the dulness of toiling at a work out of which he knew he could not possibly squeeze another guinea until he had completed at least the five volumes that had been paid for, induced him to turn his attention to a play. Instead of working steadily through his task, he wandered about the fields trying to pick up the materials for a comedy. And he seems to have been successful in bringing together sufficient to serve for a rough draft to be submitted to a manager.

It was to this rough draft he alluded in the solitary letter which is forthcoming of the many he must have written to Bennet Langton, who had lately married one of the three Countesses Dowager of Rothes. It is dated from the Temple, September 7, 1771, a month after the publication of his *History of England.*

"My dear Sir,

"Since I had the pleasure of seeing you last, I have been almost wholly in the country at a farmer's house, quite alone, trying to write a comedy. It is now finished, but when or how it will be acted, or whether it will be acted at all, are questions I cannot resolve. I am therefore so much employed upon that, that I am under the necessity of putting off my intended visit to Lincolnshire for this season. Reynolds is just returned from Paris, and finds himself now in the case of a truant that must make up for his idle time by diligence. We have therefore agreed to postpone our journey till next summer, when we hope to have the honour of waiting upon Lady Rothes, and you, and staying double the time of our late intended visit. We often meet, and never without remembering you. I see Mr. Beauclerk very often both in town and country. He is now going directly forward to become a second Boyle: deep in chymistry and physics. Johnson has been down upon a visit to a country parson, Doctor Taylor;

and is returned to his old haunts at Mrs Thrale's. Burke is a farmer, *en attendant* a better place; but visiting about too. Every soul is a visiting about and merry but myself. And that is hard too, as I have been trying these three months to do something to make people laugh. There have I been strolling about the hedges, studying jests with a most tragical countenance. The *Natural History* is about half finished, and I will shortly finish the rest. God knows I am tired of this kind of finishing, which is but bungling work; and that not so much my fault as the fault of my scurvy circumstances. They begin to talk in town of the Opposition's gaining ground; the cry of liberty is still as loud as ever. I have published, or Davies has published for me, an *Abridgement of the History of England*, for which I have been a good deal abused in the newspapers for betraying the liberties of the people. God knows I had no thought for or against liberty in my head; my whole aim being to make up a book of a decent size, that, as 'Squire Richard says, would do no harm to nobody. However, they set me down as an arrant Tory, and consequently an honest man. When you come to look at any part of it, you'll say that I am a sour Whig. God bless you, and with my most respectful compliments to her ladyship,

"I remain, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH."

The attacks made upon his *History of England* were due to the extraordinary lengths that faction was permitted to carry people during those made Wilkes-Junius years in England. It was difficult for any one to write even the simplest essay without suspicion being aroused that the writer's pen had been subsidised either by the Government or the Opposition. The most commonplace sentences were tortured into a significance which in ordinary times no one could possibly think of attributing to them. In the case of a writer who had within a year or two reached the highest position and whose importance was recognised by the attempt to buy him which was made by Lord Sandwich, it can easily be understood that everything he wrote should be subjected to this scrutiny; and once suspicion is aroused in regard to any book, one has

only to read it suspiciously and one will quickly obtain ample proof on every page of all that one suspected and probably a good deal more.

> Trifles light as air
> Are to the jealous confirmation strong
> As proof of Holy Writ.

And so assuredly are the writings of a man who is read with suspicion. The only difficulty that there could be in the case of this *History* by Goldsmith is suggested by himself in the letter just quoted: The Whig faction were likely to accuse him of being a Tory and the Tory faction of being a Whig.

But Goldsmith was really like Canning's Needy Knife-Grinder—in one respect, but in one respect only: "Story? Lor' bless you I have none to tell," he was ready to cry. He had no thought of taking either side—the side that was muddling the governing of the country or the side that was muddling the opposing of these depredators. He took by no means a lofty view of his responsibilities as a historian. He had none of those high hopes of revolutionising existing opinion respecting certain persons or certain episodes, which seem to animate the more scientific historians of modern days, and which many of them realise—until the next batch comes along to reverse all that they have said. Goldsmith was extremely modest in his preface; but it was just this modesty that caused the critical spies to believe that he was a Jesuit and that his adherence to the masquerade as an entertainment was due to his having habituated himself to the mask as a writer of history.

His work was attacked in many directions, but on none of its many vulnerable points. His critics did not understand the rudiments of their business; and though Tom Davies was so alarmed for his own safety financially, that he went to the extreme length of writing a favourable review of the *History* in the *Public Advertiser*—a proceeding of which he was extremely proud—there was no reason for his trepidation. The public believed in Goldsmith, and they did not believe in party. His version of the *History of England* was the one they wanted and they bought the thing that they knew they wanted. He had read the works of Rapin, Carte, Smollett

and Hume, and compiled his narrative from these excellent authorities. He made a delightful story out of the records of crime which were always looked upon as constituting the backbone of English history, until a new type of anatomist appeared, to show that the growth of a great nation is in the long run not greatly affected by the crimes of their governors for the moment.

That is the most that can be said of Goldsmith's *History of England*, and the fact that, like his *History of Rome*, it remained the favourite of the public and that it was practically the only handbook of history that found its way into English schools during the same period, proves a good deal. Whatever were its shortcomings it had sufficient attractions to cause the study of history to be interesting where it had previously been dull, to draw to its pages readers whom previously every history had repelled.

The mistakes that it contained were numerous. When a compiler has been drawing upon four authors he naturally incorporates into his work four sets of blunders. It seems strange that one of the most flagrant of all should be made by himself. In his reference to the Siege of Londonderry, he stated that the defence was undertaken by "One Walker, a dissenting minister." Now, it might be expected that a descendant of the Protestant settlers of Ireland would be acquainted from his childhood with the heroic achievement, almost unparalleled in history, of the holding of the little city on the Foyle for one hundred and four days, against a large and well disciplined army, composed chiefly of Frenchmen, until relief came by sea. Not half a century had elapsed between the Siege of Londonderry and the birth of Oliver Goldsmith, and only a hundred miles or so separated the parsonage of his father and the palace of Dromore, where the gallant Walker had lived since his appointment by the King, whom he had so well served, to the diocese as Bishop, and yet Goldsmith had never heard of him, and had actually believed that he was one of the ministers whom the Presbyterian Scots had brought with them when they set about the work of the Ulster plantation.

Percy was very indignant with him for making such a mistake, for he himself knew all there was to know about

Dr. George Walker, having received the Bishopric that Walker had held for something under a year.

But his blunders in the *History* did not cause Goldsmith any uneasiness. He estimated much more correctly than did the public or Dr. Johnson the value of his labours in such a field. "God knows I had no thought for or against liberty in my head; my whole aim being to make up a book of a decent size, that, as Squire Richard says, 'would do no harm to nobody.'" The closing lines of his letter to Bennet Langton embody his ambitions as a historian.

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CHAPTER XXXI

VISITS AND LETTERS

1771—1772

When he wrote to Langton he was at the point of setting out for Barton Hall, where he was to be one of the party which the Bunburys were bringing together before their honeymoon was quite over. Henry William Bunbury had married Catherine Horneck, and they were living at the family seat until the small house which they subsequently occupied, close to Barton Hall, should be ready for them. We have a suspicion that the tact of the good friends whom Goldsmith had in the Hornecks, as well as in Henry Bunbury and Reynolds, was accountable for this visit, in order to bring Garrick and himself into closer touch with each other. Garrick was to be of the party, and every one knew that Garrick and he had never been on the best of terms, though frequently meeting. Reynolds was so excellent a business man himself that he could not help feeling that a *rapprochement* between the two would be mutually advantageous to them, and he also knew that Goldsmith would be seen to greatest advantage in the country, and surrounded by charming people.

The visit took place, and was a very delightful one; but it did not bear any fruit in the way of establishing on a practical basis a business understanding between the two men. No doubt there was some talk about the new comedy, and there is no reason to believe that if Garrick had shown any interest in it he might not have had a chance of reading it, and he would probably have availed himself of the opportunity of rejecting it; for he was not a very good judge of a play, and, like so many others of the class who feel so deeply that those who live to please must please to live, he had a mortal dread of innovations. Although Kelly, whom he had run against

Goldsmith some years before, had turned out a very bad bargain, his last play having been an absolute fiasco, yet there was another exponent of sentimental comedy come to the front, and the public were greatly pleased with him. This was Richard Cumberland, who was the author of *The West Indian*, and, better still, the son of a bishop and the grandson of another bishop. Garrick thought that something could be done with Cumberland, but he doubted if anything could be done with Goldsmith. Perhaps he may have felt that, as everything Goldsmith had done had added to his reputation, it would be against every law of probability that he should continue on this ascending scale of success. The modern manager of a theatre seems to choose his plays on something of the same principle. The writer who has made the largest number of consecutive failures is the one for him; for his delicate discrimination leads him to perceive that the more failures a playwriter achieves, the greater is the likelihood of his new work being a success. Discriminating people buy a dog that has got over its distemper and other canine disorders, knowing that its chances of turning out well are thereby increased.

But whether or not Garrick looked at the question of Goldsmith from the standpoint of the lottery, he does not seem to have been greatly interested to hear that he had the draft of a new comedy in his trunk, and Goldsmith spent his time amusing his friends at Barton and being made the victim of their practical jokes. From the account given by his Jessamy Bride years afterwards, when she was "old and a mine of memories," the sole survivor of an interesting group, we gather that the members of the Barton Hall party were a number of high-spirited boys and girls, and that the ideal of their fun was that which is still the schoolboys'—the tumbling of a man with a particularly good coat on his back into a pond. When the man with the good coat is, in spite of this strong piece of evidence in favour of quite another assumption, a poet, and not only so, but an historian of Rome and England as well, life can offer but little farther to his friends with a sense of what is humourous.

The great poet who was a visitor at Barton was the greatest schoolboy of the whole jolly band. The traditional poet

would have been like a fish out of water in such a company; but whatever Goldsmith was, he certainly was not that. If there was any fun going he was in the middle of that, and if there was any water going he was in the middle of that as well. After describing his feats at the water-jump which just fell short by a few inches of landing him dry-shod on the bank, the Jessamy Bride mentioned that, more than anything, he enjoyed a romp with the children. A romp with the children! Well, no doubt after all his adventures with their elders, he must have enjoyed the comparative tranquillity of a romp with the children.

It is needless to say that his wig was not lost sight of as a potent agent of fun. Judiciously treated, a wig should keep a mixed company in a good humour for an indefinite time; and Goldsmith's wig seems to have missed doing so—if at all—only by a hair's-breadth. He himself had long ago mastered some of its possibilities. He had been known to fling it up to the ceiling when playing the fool in a London house; but he soon came to learn how meagre were his resources compared with those of his friends at Barton. He found that he had scarcely more than crossed the boundary where wig-dignity ends and wig-humour begins. What was all that nonsense of his throwing the thing up to the ceiling and so forth, compared with the masterpiece represented by transferring it when bedraggled to the care of a valet who had never curled a wig in his life, with instructions to have it ready to be worn by dinner-time? The Jessamy Bride remembered something of the result after half a century had passed; but she was too wise to make any attempt to describe it.

And when it came to sitting down to a round game of cards he could amuse the whole company by his drollery, assuming an eagerness to win the few pence in the pool, and affecting a chagrin at losing, which was highly diverting. Mrs. Gwyn also remembered his singing many songs, some of them of his own composition in regard to the words. The melodies may have been some of those ancient Irish ones, of which he must have had a store. And, more interesting still, she recollected his reading to her and her sister one day some chapters of a new novel which he was writing.

What was this novel and where is it to-day? These are the questions which every one will ask. It is not known to be in existence in any form. We can only surmise that this was the romance which he had agreed some years before to write for Newbery. It was to be similar in style to *The Vicar of Wakefield;* but when some chapters of it went to Newbery he declined to accept them, alleging that they referred only to the story contained in *The Good Natur'd Man*, and his contract was for something original.

Another surmise on a slenderer foundation still may possibly be permitted to us in this place. Mr. Forster, in his *Life*, mentioned the discovery only a short time before the publication of this masterpiece, of a poem in Oliver Goldsmith's handwriting, and supposed to be by him. It was a translation or an adaptation of Vida's *Game of Chess*, and it has since been included in some editions of the poet's works. Now one of Bunbury's best etchings shows two girls in Oriental costume playing chess. The features of the girls suggest very strongly the artist's wife and her sister Mary, and we know that one of them at least had appeared in a picture in Oriental dress. Might it not be possible, we would venture to inquire, that the girls were sitting to the artist for this etching during one of Goldsmith's visits to Barton, and that he was induced to adapt Vida's poem, *The Game of Chess*, for their amusement?

He was accustomed to introduce scraps of rhyme into his letters to Mrs. Bunbury and her sister after the matter of his first communication to the charming pair, which puts us in possession of his nicknames for them and their brother. One of these letters, which fortunately was preserved by the recipient though not published until long after her death, is delightful in its unaffected fun and gentle raillery. It was written in reply to Mrs. Bunbury's invitation to him to come to them at Christmas, which must have contained some allusions—easily intelligible to him—to the hue of one of his coats worn during a previous visit, and also to some episode of dancing with the haymakers; nor was that fruitful source of all that was found ludicrous, the wig, forgotten by the lady.

This was the letter:

"MADAM,

"I read your letter with all that allowance which critical candour could require, but after all find so much to object to, and so much to raise my indignation, that I cannot help giving it a serious answer.

"I am not so ignorant, Madam, as not to see there are many sarcasms contained in it, and solecisms also. (Solecism is a word that comes from the town of Soleis in Attica, among the Greeks, built by Solon, and applies as we use the word Kidderminster, for curtains from a town also of that name,—but this is learning you have no taste for!)—I say, Madam, there are many sarcasms in it, and solecisms also. But not to seem an ill-natured critic, I'll take leave to quote your own words, and give you my remarks upon them as they occur. You begin as follows:

> 'I hope my good Doctor, you soon will be here,
> And your spring-velvet coat very smart will appear,
> To open our ball the first day of the year.'

"Pray, Madam, where did you ever find the epithet 'good,' applied to the title of Doctor? Had you called me 'learned Doctor,' or 'grave Doctor,' or 'noble Doctor,' it might be allowable, because they belong to the profession. But, not to cavil at trifles, you talk of my 'spring-velvet coat,' and advise me to wear it the first day in the year, that is, in the middle of winter!—a spring-velvet coat in the middle of winter!!! That would be a solecism indeed! and yet to increase the inconsistence, in another part of your letter you call me a beau. Now, on one side or other, you must be wrong. If I am a beau, I can never think of wearing a spring-velvet in winter: and if I am not a beau, why then, that explains itself. But let me go on to your two next strange lines:

> 'And bring with you a wig, that is modish and gay
> To dance with the girls that are makers of hay.'

"The absurdity of making hay at Christmas you yourself seem sensible of: you say your sister will laugh; and so indeed she well may! The Latins have an expression for a contemptuous kind of laughter, '*naso contemnere adunco*'; that is, to laugh with a crooked nose. She may laugh at you

in the manner of the antients if she thinks fit. But now I come to the most extraordinary of all extraordinary propositions, which is, to take your and your sister's advice in playing at loo. The presumption of the offer raises my indignation beyond the bounds of prose; it inspires me at once with verse and resentment. I take advice! and from whom? You shall hear.

First let me suppose, what may shortly be true,
The company set, and the word to be, Loo:
All smirking, and pleasant, and big with adventure,
And ogling the stake which is fix'd in the centre.
Round and round go the cards, while I inwardly damn
At never once finding a visit from Pam.
I lay down my stake, apparently cool,
While the harpies about me all pocket the pool.
I fret in my gizzard, yet cautious and sly,
I wish all my friends may be bolder than I:
Yet still they sit snug, not a creature will aim
By losing their money to venture at fame.
'Tis in vain that at niggardly caution I scold,
'Tis in vain that I flatter the brave and the bold:
All play their own way, and they think me an ass,—
'What does Mrs. Bunbury?'— I, Sir, I pass.'
'Pray what does Miss Horneck? take courage, come do—'
'Who, I? let me see, Sir, why I must pass too.'
Mr. Bunbury frets, and I fret like the devil,
To see them so cowardly, lucky, and civil.
Yet still I sit snug, and continue to sigh on,
Till, made by my losses as bold as lion,
I venture at all—while my avarice regards
The whole pool as my own—'Come give me five cards.'.
'Well done!' cry the ladies; 'Ah, Doctor, that's good!
'The pool's very rich—ah, the Doctor is loo'd!'
Thus foil'd in my courage, on all sides perplext,
I ask for advice from the lady that's next:
'Pray, Ma'am, be so good as to give your advice;
'Don't you think the best way is to "venture for't twice?"
'I advise,' cries the lady, 'to try it, I own—
'Ah! the Doctor is loo'd! Come, Doctor, put down.'
Thus, playing, and playing, I still grow more eager,
And so bold, and so bold, I'm at last a bold beggar.
Now, ladies, I ask, if law-matters you're skilled in,
Whether crimes such as yours should not come before Fielding:
For giving advice that is not worth a straw,
May well be call'd picking of pockets in law;
And picking of pockets, with which I now charge ye,
Is, by quinto Elizabeth, Death without Clergy.

What justice, when both to the Old Bailey brought!
By the gods, I'll enjoy it, tho' 'tis but in thought!
Both are plac'd at the bar, with all proper decorum,
With bunches of fennell, and nosegays before 'em;
Both cover their faces with mobs and all that,
But the judge bids them, angrily, take off their hat.
When uncover'd a buz of inquiry runs round,—
'Pray what are their crimes?'—'They've been pilfering found.'
'But, pray, who have they pilfer'd?'—'A Doctor, I hear.'
'What, yon solemn-faced, odd looking man that stands near!'
'The same'—'What a pity! How does it surprise one,
'Two handsomer culprits I never set eyes on!'
Then their friends all come round me with cringing and leering,
To melt me to pity, and soften my swearing.
First Sir Charles advances with phrases well-strung,
'Consider, dear Doctor, the girls are but young.'
'The younger the worse,' I return him again,
'It shews that their habits are all dyed in grain.
'But then they're so handsome, one's bosom it grieves.'
'What signifies *handsome*, when people are thieves?
'But where is your justice? their cases are hard.'
'What signifies *justice?* I want the reward.'

"There's the parish of Edmonton offers forty pounds; there's the parish of St. Leonard Shoreditch offers forty pounds; there's the parish of Tyburn, from the Hog-in-the-Pound to St. Giles's watch-house, offers forty pounds,—I shall have all that if I convict them!—

'But consider their case—it may yet be your own!
And see how they kneel! Is your heart made of stone?'
This moves;—so at last I agree to relent.
For ten pounds in hand, and ten pounds to be spent.

"I challenge you all to answer this: I tell you, you cannot. It cuts deep:—but now for the rest of the letter; and next—but I want room—so I believe I shall battle the rest out at Barton some day next week.

"I don't value you all!

"O. G."

It is not known whether he went to Barton so soon after his first visit as Christmas would be. But it is certain that during the next year, 1772, he was there more than once, though, as usual, he could ill spare the time, and still less readily, the money, which such a holiday entailed. Before many months of the year had gone by he had drawn the

balance that remained to him from *Animated Nature*—to be exact, as one should be in the matter of accounts, we should say the balance that would have been due to him when he had written and delivered the copy for the final volume. Among all the writers who had reason to testify to the generosity of their publishers—and they are many—Goldsmith stands easily first. Whatever his drudgery may have been during the last six or seven years of his life, it was of his own creating; it was not imposed upon him either by Davies or Griffin. They were the most generous of taskmasters. They paid him for work which he had not done, and which they had no guarantee he would ever do. Griffin would have had great reason to complain that he was being badly treated when, after he had advanced that £500 for *Animated Nature*, the author accepted the commission for the four volumes of the *English History* from Davies, agreeing to complete them within two years; but, instead of making any protest against the shelving of the larger and more arduous work, five or six months after the issue of the *English History* he handed over the £300 which would only have been due when the last of the eight volumes of *Animated Nature* had been sent to the press. It really should be said of Goldsmith that he suffered nearly as much from the generosity of his publishers as he did from his own. If they had insisted on his dealings with them being on a reasonable business basis he would soon have ceased to look on his work as so much drudgery. All work seems drudgery to one who has been paid for doing it before it is begun, and the hardship seems doubled when the money has been spent with nothing to show for it. All that can be alleged against the booksellers is that, instead of encouraging him in the production of imaginative work, they set him to do the work of compilation. There was surely room for another *Vicar of Wakefield*, and if Newbery did not think that the chapters of the story which Goldsmith submitted to him were likely to make a good beginning to a novel, that was no reason why he should not have encouraged the author to make another attempt. But just at that time, when Newbery was well aware that he had twelve, if not fourteen volumes, actually in hand, he may have felt that it would be ridiculous to talk of a new work of fiction.

What he did talk of was a settlement of the accounts between the author and himself, and he carried on his conversation to such purpose that we find one of his entries in which Goldsmith stands in the novel position of creditor for £200! Newbery should have made the entry in red ink.

Early in 1772, he became acquainted with Cradock, a gentleman of family and fortune, with a country seat in Leicestershire and literary tastes. He was a friend of Lord Clare, and he came to town to produce a translation which he had made of Voltaire's *Zobeide*. Goldsmith met him at the house of Yates, the actor, who was to take the principal part in the tragedy, and, pleased to be associated with anything by the French author for whom he had so great a respect, he promised to write a prologue. As a specimen of his ability in this extinct form of composition it must be quoted. It is one of the best examples of prologue writing that has survived the wreck of eighteenth-century dramatic literature. In the eighteenth century there was a dramatic literature. In the nineteenth there was an illiterate drama, and in the twentieth there is the music-hall.

The chief quality which it was necessary that a prologue should possess was, clearly, aptness. It should introduce the topic of the hour, and the topic of the spring of 1772 was the South Sea explorations of Lieutenant Cook. The adroitness of the poet in touching upon these is worthy of recognition, and must have been recognised by all parts of the house. But the very doubtful rhymes which he allowed himself in some of the couplets suggest his impression that they would not be repeated with great frequency. In his own poems he never has anything so slovenly as "enters" jingling with "adventures," or "laden" with "trading"; nor would he have allowed a line to end with the word "aid" rhyming with "trade," when the rhymes in the couplet immediately preceding were "laid her" and "trader." But he knew that no one minded such artistic shortcomings in a prologue. The great point was that he struck the right note at once and stopped short at exactly the right moment.

> In these bold times, when Learning's sons explore
> The distant climates and the savage shore;

When wise astronomers to India steer,
And quit for Venus many a brighter here;
While botanists all cold to smile and dimpling,
Forsake the fair and patiently—go simpling:
Our bard into the general spirit enters,
And fits his little frigate for adventures.
With Scythian stores, and trinkets deeply laden,
He this way steers his course, in hopes of trading—
Yet ere he lands he's order'd me before,
To make an observation on the shore.
Where are we driven? our reckoning sure is lost!
This seems a rocky and a dangerous coast.
Lord, what a sultry climate am I under!
Yon ill foreboding cloud seems big with thunder:
(*Upper Gallery*)
There mangroves spread, and larger than I've seen 'em
Here trees of stately size—and billing turtles in 'em.
(*Balconies*)
Here ill-condition'd oranges abound—
(*Stage*)
And apples, bitter apples strew the ground:
(*Tasting them*)
The inhabitants are cannibals I fear:
I heard a hissing—there are serpents here!
O, there the people are—best keep my distance:
Our Captain, gentle natives! craves assistance;
Our ship's well stor'd—in yonder creek we've laid her,
His honour is no mercenary trader.
This is his first adventure, lend him aid,
And we may chance to drive a thriving trade.
His goods, he hopes, are prime, and brought from far,
Equally fit for gallantry and war.
What, no reply to promises so ample?
I'd best step back—and order up a sample.

The play which followed was not even a noteworthy failure. Respecting it Walpole write to Lady Ossory: "There is a new tragedy at Covent Garden called *Zobeide* which I am told is very indifferent, though written by a country gentleman."

"*Though written by a country gentleman.*" It does indeed seem little short of miraculous how, with so obvious a qualification for success, the play did not succeed.

Goldsmith's intimacy with Cradock increased during the next few months; and it was increased by the former's writing of a lament on the death of the Princess Dowager of Wales to which he gave Dryden's title *Threnodia Augustalis.*

The poem, which was announced to be "by a gentleman of acknowledged literary merit," was written to be recited with incidental music at one of the Cornelly Concerts in Soho Square. Mrs. Cornelly's musical evenings had become the fashion, and remained so for several years. They were supposed to be very select, and so they undoubtedly were. Goldsmith was accustomed to allude to the miscellaneous entertainments which he gave at his rooms as "little Cornellys." He did not take much trouble over his *Threnodia*, the only interest he took in the work was on account of the friendship that had existed between his friend Lord Clare and the royal lady in whose memory it was written. Nugent had been a strong partisan of the Prince and Princess of Wales, and after the death of the former, had remained for many years an adherent of the princess. The poem is on the same level as the "book" for the oratorio *The Captivity*. It did not attract much attention, and no one seems to have associated Goldsmith's name with it. In the early posthumous edition of his works it is not to be found.

It was certainly not on account of the performance of this work during the month of February, that Boswell, coming to London from his native Scotland, was amazed to find the name of Goldsmith in everybody's mouth. He could not understand the reason, and so he applied to Johnson for a solution.

"Sir," he complained to his mentor, "Goldsmith has acquired more fame than all the officers last war who were not generals." "Why, sir," replied Johnson, "you will find ten thousand fit to do what they did before you find one fit to do what Goldsmith has done."

The explanation reminds one of the reply of the avaricious *prima donna* to the potentate who refused to accede to her terms on the plea that, were he to pay her price, she would be receiving more than any of his marshals": "*Eh, bien, mon sire.* Let your marshals sing to you."

Boswell found that Goldsmith was even more sought after than Johnson, but he could not for the life of him understand how such a state of things could exist, though it is not long before he lets his readers into the secret which he himself, to the day of his death, failed to fathom. He makes us see clearly that Goldsmith was becoming every day more companionable.

Although Boswell had been in Scotland for some time, it does not appear that the gaiety of London was eclipsed by his absence, or that the Johnsonian circle suffered greatly by the gap his departure had left in it. He had been in some law cases before the Court at Edinburgh, and the practice in cross-examination which they afforded him he thought he might with propriety continue in London. He soon found out his mistake. Johnson turned upon him. "Sir," he shouted, "I will not be put to the question. Don't you consider, sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I will not be baited with *what* and *why*. What is this? What is that? Why is a cow's tail long? Why is a fox's tail bushy?"

Happily, he was so constituted as to be incapable of feeling such rebuffs. He alluded to them under the general designation of "wit," and certainly in these days he must have found Johnson the prince of humourists. The author of *Animated Nature* might have been worse employed than in studying Boswell as an example of the indifference with which one of the order *Pachydermata* regards attacks from one of the order *Ursidæ*.

We are indebted to Boswell for an entertaining account of a dinner at General Oglethorpe's, at which they all met, and in the course of which the old general gave reminiscences of Marlborough's wars, pretty much as old generals in the middle years of the nineteenth century did of the Peninsular, and as some—becoming, alas! fewer every year—still talk of "the Mutiny." Some of the wine was spilled on the table to enable their host to illustrate the order of the Siege of Belgrade; and perhaps it was this spilling of the wine that drew from Oglethorpe the oft-repeated story of the insolent Prince of Würtemberg's flicking some wine in the face of the young officer who lived to be old and to tell the story of how he promptly said, "A capital jest, my prince; but we do it much better in England," and quickly threw a full glass of wine in his face.

From the spilling of wine to the shedding of blood is a simple sequence. A duel had been avoided between Oglethorpe and the prince, but should duels always be avoided?—was duelling morally justifiable? That was what Boswell

was anxious to know. Goldsmith said that if Boswell would fight, the question would be settled for ever, but Johnson denied such a presumption, and explained in what circumstances a duel could not be avoided. On they went to the question of people living together on friendly terms and yet differing on a point of some magnitude. As usual, Goldsmith —even according to Boswell—is able to lay his finger upon the weak point in Johnson's assertion that all the differing parties had to do in order to remain good friends was to avoid every reference to the subject of their variance. "But, sir," said Goldsmith, "when people live together who have something as to which they disagree and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of Bluebeard: '*You may look into all the chambers but one.*' But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber—to talk of that subject." That was Goldsmith's argument, and if it was not a sound one, there never was a sound argument advanced on any question. That was Goldsmith's argument. This was Johnson's. He shouted across the table, "Sir, I am not saying that *you* could live in friendship with a man from whom you differ as to some point, I am only saying that *I* could do it."

This was Johnson's wit.

From these examples of a very animated nature, Goldsmith retired to his lodging on the Edgware Road, and resumed his toils under that heading. He had by this time got about half-way through the book, and in addition to the labour that it entailed, he had to complete the Abridgement of the *History of Rome*, and there can be no doubt that he was still sanguine as to the successful carrying out of a scheme he had for a long time in his mind, for the publication of a *History of Experimental Philosophy*. With all this work on hand and before him, some one seems to have suggested to him the advisability of employing an amanuensis. He had had some experience of a help of this sort, but found that when he had need of some facts about China methodically arranged, and set his "help" to do this for him, the result was too startling to be of any practical value to him, for, according to the researches of this assistant, China was vaguely situated somewhere between India and Persia, and the inhabitants had a dash of

the Otaheitan about them. His amanuensis was equally a failure. He sat looking at the young man and the young man sat looking at him, and then Goldsmith put a guinea into his hand and allowed him to go away. So at least is the story told by one Pugh, in the course of his *Remarkable Occurrences in the Life of James Hanway, Esq.*

He worked continuously on his *Animated Nature* and the Abridgement of the *History of Rome*, and managed to throw off a few magazine articles as well, before he returned to town, to display his envy of the encomiums passed upon the puppets in Panton Street—that funny incident so seriously described, to which we have already alluded—and to take part in the Ranelagh masquerades with the Hornecks, now become almost inseparable from him, and with Reynolds. He went with George Steevens and Johnson to see the aged Macklin play at Covent Garden, and he supped *tête-à-tête* with Johnson off rump steaks and kidneys. Pretty things, Johnson thought them, but not filling. "How many of them would reach to the moon?" asked Goldsmith. "To the moon," said Johnson. "Ah, Goldy, I fear that exceeds your calculation." "Not at all, sir," said Goldsmith, "I think I could tell." "Pray then, sir, let us hear." "Why one—if it were long enough," cried Goldsmith, and Johnson confessed that he had deserved the pitfall. "I should not have provoked so foolish an answer by so foolish a question," he said.

He accompanied Johnson to the Thrales' hospitable house several times this year, and occasionally he was one of Mrs. Vesey's lions, as well as Mrs. Montague's. The blue stockings were very pronounced in colour at that time. Then we find him interested in the new dining-club at St. James' Coffee House, and longing to act the part of Scrub in *The Beaux Stratagem* which there was some talk of the members, not of this mushroom club, but of the old one at Gerard Street, going to Lichfield to represent in honour of Johnson and Garrick—a very doubtful way of honouring a great actor and his master, some people may think. And not the least interesting of his associates at this time is to be found in a letter which he received from Tom Paine. It is given by Percy in juxtaposition with a letter of Oglethorpe's, from which we

have already quoted. The right reverend prelate treated Tom Paine with the scantiest of courtesy. Introducing the letters, Percy says they are "from two remarkable characters; but as opposite as can be found between a friend and an enemy of the human race; the one distinguished for the most exalted application, the other for the vilest abuse: of singular talents: both intimately connected with the history of America, where the one had founded a flourishing colony, the other hath endeavoured to poison and corrupt all the colonies. Not to keep the reader longer in suspense, these are two letters, from the venerable General Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia; and the notorious Thomas Paine, then an officer of the excise, whose claim therein to singular modesty will divert the reader."

Tom Paine was more concerned at that moment with the wrongs of the Excisemen than with the *Rights of Man*. He was stationed at Lewes, and seems to have been connected with getting up a petition to Parliament for the increase of the salaries of the minor officials associated with the Excise Department. This petition or memorial was his first literary work, and he seems to have been as proud of it as a tradesman is of seeing his name in print. Why he should have sent a copy of it to Goldsmith it is difficult to tell. He may have read *The Deserted Village* and thought that the sentiments it contained indicated on the part of the author a sympathy with that revolutionary spirit which was in the air, but the strength of which Exciseman Paine had not so accurately gauged. But however this may be, he had certainly heard that Goldsmith was an approachable man, and he was anxious to meet a brother *littérateur* and to learn how much they had in common.

This is the letter:

"Honoured sir,

"Herewith I present you with the case of the officers of excise. A compliment of this kind from an entire stranger may appear somewhat singular; but the following reasons and information will I presume sufficiently apologize.

"I act myself in the humble station of an officer of excise, though somewhat differently circumstanced to what many

of them are, and have been the principal promoter of a plan for applying to Parliament this session for an increase of salary. A petition for this purpose has been circulated through every part of the kingdom, and signed by all the officers therein. A subscription of three shillings per officer is raised, amounting to upwards of five hundred pounds, for supporting the expenses.

"The excise officers in all cities and corporate towns have obtained letters of recommendation from the electors to the members on their behalf, many or most of whom have promised their support. The enclosed case we have presented to most of the members, and shall to all, before the petition appear in the house.

"The memorial before you met with so much approbation while in manuscript, that I was advised to print four thousand copies: three thousand of which were subscribed for by the officers in general, and the remaining one thousand reserved for presents.

"Since the delivering them, I have received so many letters of thanks and approbation for the performance, that were I not rather singularly modest, I should insensibly become a little vain.

"The literary fame of Dr. Goldsmith has induced me to present one to him, such as it is. 'Tis my first and only attempt, and even now I should not have undertaken it, had I not been particularly applied to by some of my superiors in office.

"I have some few questions to trouble Dr. Goldsmith with, and should esteem his company for an hour or two, to partake of a bottle of wine or anything else, and apologize for this trouble, as a singular favour conferred on

"His unknown
"Humble Servant
"and Admirer
"THOMAS PAINE.

"EXCISE COFFEE HOUSE,
"Broad Street. *December* 21, 1772.

"P.S. Shall take the liberty of waiting on you in a day or two."

This letter has undoubtedly an interest of its own, for

within two years of its date the writer's fortunes had undergone a great change, and he was on the way to become celebrated, or, according to Percy, notorious. The "case" which he presented to Goldsmith was so well done as to cause the Government to dispense with his services at the Excise—they made the fact of his keeping a tobacconist's shop a reason for his dismissal, and it would appear to have been quite a valid one; but Benjamin Franklin, having probably been also one of the recipients of the "case," and having complied with the author's request for an interview, commended him very highly and gave him the assurance that America was waiting for such men as he. Paine took the hint and found that this information was correct. America received him with enthusiasm, as also did France when her Revolution was in progress. He was more fortunate than the Scotch Exciseman who had shown himself in too great sympathy with the same tremendous national convulsion, and who, born two years later then Tom Paine, died thirteen years earlier, miserable to the last because he had no friend near him of the practical insight of Franklin to advise him for his good.

Uneventful, save for a severe attack of the malady from which he had suffered six or seven years earlier, had Goldsmith's life been since the publication of his *History of England*. Since the attractions of the fashionable circle in which he found himself were so great, he returned to them from his cottage as seldom as possible. The terrible weight of those obligations of his in respect of the *History of Animated Nature* was pressing heavily upon him; and at last the time arrived when it became insupportable. He had only one hope of rescue remaining—the comedy which he had written nearly two years before, but which seemed no nearer production than it had ever been. The truth is that at that time the same struggle was going on in stage matters as has become prominent at certain periods in England both as regards the drama and literature. The sentimentalists and the realists have ever been engaged in a struggle for preeminence; and at no time would it be possible to say with certainty which side was winning and which was losing ground. We have seen something of the contest within our own generation. We have laughed at the books that our fathers

and mothers and uncles and aunts wept over so copiously; and have even failed to be in the least impressed by the heroic gentlemen who stalked gloomily through the fiction of fifty years ago, flinging purses to right and left. These splendid heroes were more heroic still when they were put upon the stage; and the simperers in sandals and book-muslin who fainted at the whisper of an idiomatic phrase, and swooned at the sight of an underdone beefsteak, drew all manly sympathy to them when put into a play.

They would be looked on as ridiculous caricatures to-day; but for all her delicacy and timidity, the sentimental little woman showed herself to be as long-lived as a chronic invalid, and the gloomy hero retained his raven curls without a streak of grey, well into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. No works of fiction have been more popular than Bulwer Lytton's, and no plays have been more popular than *The Lady of Lyons*, *Richelieu*, and *Money*—the positive, comparative and superlative degrees of all that is artificial in style, unhealthy in tone, and mawkish in sentiment. And yet when the distinguished actor and actress who had done so much to introduce natural characterisation and simple incidents into comedy migrated to another theatre in London, they could not find a play which promised more success to their new enterprise than the fustian *Money;* and when the greatest actor of our time was anxious to consolidate a reputation due to his acting of *Hamlet*, he produced *Richelieu*, and afterwards joined with the most exquisite Beatrice in presenting *The Lady of Lyons.* But only the judicious few shook their heads. The judicial paying crowd clapped their hands.

These few incidents of the last quarter of the nineteenth century may be accepted as illustrative of the attitude of the leading exponents of the drama in respect of all that is tawdry and meretricious. A score of such instances of the variations in public taste and of the varieties of managers' obtuseness could be given by any one whose acquaintance with the stage goes back twenty-five or thirty years; but the few that occur to us may help to an understanding of the difficulties of Goldsmith with the two managers on whose whims the drama of the period was dependent. They both professed to see the foolishness of the comedy of unreality, but neither

of the pair had the courage of his opinion. They had both made money out of it in the past, and were not sure that they might not make money out of it in the future. They no longer had ambitions to direct the taste of the public, they were content to be directed by it. No doubt they quoted the couplet which has always been the manager's charter for producing a contemptible thing that pays :

> The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
> For those who live to please must please to live.

They did not know what was coming. Each had an eye on the other, and his other eye was on the look-out for the jumping cat.

That was the condition of things at the theatres when Goldsmith wrote his second comedy in 1771, and placed it in the hands of Colman, altering it and revising it, and perhaps improving it, during the next year. But still Colman professed not to be able to assign a date to its production. The whole story of the manager's ineptitude and of the author's suffering must, however, be narrated without a break to allow of one's appreciating the risk that was run of the finest comedy of its century being left to moulder on the manager's shelf.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE STORY OF THE COMEDY

1772—1773

He occupied one room in the farmhouse—the guest-chamber it had probably been called when the farm was young. It was a pretty spacious apartment, up one pair of stairs and to the right of the landing, and from its window there was a pleasing prospect of a paddock with wheatfields beyond; there was a drop in the landscape in the direction of Hendon, and here was a little wood. The farmer's name was Selby, a married man, with a son of sixteen and younger children, and the farmhouse was the nearest building to the sixth milestone on the Edgware Road.

He was invariably alluded to as "the gentleman," and the name did very well for him, situated as he was in the country; in the town and among his acquaintance it would serve badly as a means of identification. He was never referred to as "the gentleman" of the Johnsonian group. In his room in the farmhouse there was his bed and table—a large table littered with books: it took two chaises to carry his books hither from his rooms in the Temple. Here he sat and wrote the greater part of the day, and when he was very busy he would scarcely be able to touch the meals which were sent up to him from the kitchen. But he was by no means that dignified type of the man of letters who would shrink from fellowship with the farmer or his family. He frequently came down his stairs into the kitchen and stood with his back to the fire, conversing with the housewife.

And then upon occasions "the gentleman" would take a walk abroad; the farmer's son had more than once come upon him strolling about the fields with his hands in his pockets and his head bent toward the ground, still muttering fitfully

and occasionally giving a laugh. Now and again he paid a visit to his friend Mr. Hugh Boyd at the village of Kenton, and once he returned late at night from such a visit without his shoes. He had left them in a quagmire, he said, and it was only with a struggle that he saved himself from being engulfed as well. That was the story of his shoes which young Selby remembered when he was no longer young.

There was another story which he remembered, but it related to his slippers. The fact was that "the gentleman" had acquired the bad habit of reading in bed, and the table on which his candlestick stood being several feet away from his pillow, he saved himself the trouble of rising to extinguish the candle by flinging a slipper at it. In the morning the overturned candle was usually found side by side on the floor with an unaccountably greasy slipper. This method of discharging an important domestic duty differed considerably from Johnson's way of compassing the same end. Johnson, being extremely short-sighted, was compelled to hold the candle close to the book when reading in bed, so that he had no need to use his slipper as an extinguisher. No, but he found his pillow very handy for this purpose. When he had finished his reading he threw away the book and went to sleep with his candle under his pillow.

Goldsmith at the farm went about a good deal in his slippers and with his shirt loose at the collar—the latter must have been but one of his very customary negligences, or Sir Joshua Reynolds would not have painted him thus. Doubtless the painter had long recognised the interpretative value of this loosened collar above that of the velvet and silk raiment in which Goldsmith sometimes appeared before the wondering eyes of his friends.

But if the painter had never had an opportunity of studying the picturesqueness of his negligence in town, he had more than one chance of doing so within the farmhouse. Young Selby recollected that upon at least one occasion Sir Joshua, his friend Sir William Chambers, and Dr. Johnson had paid a visit to the gentleman who lodged at the farm. He remembered that for the reception of so distinguished a company the farmhouse parlour had been opened and tea provided. There must have been a good deal of pleasant

talk between the gentleman and his friends at this time, and probably young Selby heard an astonishingly loud laugh coming from the enormous visitor with the brown coat and the worsted stockings, as "the gentleman" endeavoured to tell his guests something of the strange scenes which he was introducing into the comedy which was then without a name, but which young Selby doubtless heard was produced the following year in London, when it was called *She Stoops to Conquer.*

This was the second year that Goldsmith had spent at the farm, working alternately at the comedy and *Animated Nature.*

It was in 1771 that Mr. Boswell paid him a visit, bringing with him as a witness Mr. Mickle, the translator of the *Lusiad.* "The gentleman" had gone away for the day, Mrs. Selby explained; but she did not know Mr. Boswell. She could not prevent him from satisfying his curiosity in respect of Dr. Goldsmith. He went upstairs to his room, and he was fully satisfied. He found the walls all scrawled over with outline drawings of quite a number of animals. Having thus satisfied himself that the author of *Animated Nature* was working in a thoroughly conscientious manner, he came away. He records the incident himself, but he does not say whether or not he was able to recognise any of the animals from the pictures.

It was in the following year that Goldsmith was revising and rewriting his comedy in the same place. Whatever disappointment he may have felt at the indifferent success of the first performance of *The Good-Natur'd Man*—and he undoubtedly felt some—had been amply redeemed by the money which accrued to him from the "author's nights" and by the sale of the play; and he had only awaited a little encouragement from the managers to enable him to begin another comedy. But the managers were not encouraging, and he was found by his friends one day to be full of a scheme for the building of a new theatre for the production of new plays, in order that the existing managers might not be able to carry on their tyranny any longer. Such a scheme has been revived every decade since Goldsmith's time, but never with the least success. Johnson, whose sound sense was rarely at fault, laughed at the poet's project for bringing down the mighty

from their seats, upon which Goldsmith cried: "Ay, sir, this matter may be nothing to you who can now shelter yourself behind the corner of your pension," and he doubtless went on to describe the conditions of the victims of the tyranny of which he complained; but it is questionable if his doing so had any greater effect than to turn Johnson's laughter into another and a wider channel.

Of course, the scheme for bringing the managers to their senses never reached a point of serious consideration; and forthwith Goldsmith began to illustrate, for the benefit of posterity, the depths to which the stupidity of the manager of a playhouse can occasionally fall. The public have always had abundant proofs of the managers' stupidity afforded them in the form of the plays which they produce; but the history of the production of the most brilliant comedy of the eighteenth century is practically unique, for it is the history of the stupidity of a manager in doing his best to bring about the failure of a play which he was producing at his own theatre. He had predicted the failure of the piece, and it must strike most people that the manager of a theatre who produces for a failure will be as successful in compassing his end as a jockey who rides for a fall. Colman believed that he was in the fortunate position of one of those prophets who had the realisation of their predictions in their own hands. He was mistaken in this particular case. Although he was justified on general principles in assuming his possession of this power, yet he had made no allowance for the freaks of genius. He was frustrated in his amiable designs by this incalculable force—this power which he had treated as a *quantité négligeable*. A man who has been accustomed all his life to count only on simple ability in the people about him is, on suddenly being brought face to face with genius, like an astronomer who makes out his tables of a new object on the assumption that it is a fixed star, when all the time it is a comet, upsetting by its erratic course all his calculations, and demanding to be reckoned with from a standpoint that applies to itself alone.

The stars of Colman's theatrical firmament were such as might safely be counted on; but Goldsmith's genius was not of this order. The manager's stupidity lay in his blunt

refusal to recognise a work of genius when it was brought to him by a man of genius.

We have already mentioned that the central idea of the plot of *She Stoops to Conquer* may have been suggested by that incident of his boyhood when he was directed to the house of Mr. P. Featherstone as an inn, and it cannot be denied that the playing of the practical joke of Tony Lumpkin upon the two travellers is "very Irish." It is certain that the play was constructed and written by Goldsmith without an adviser. He was possibly shrewd enough to know that if he were to take counsel with any of his friends—Garrick, Johnson, Reynolds, or Colman—he would not be able to write the play which he had a mind to write. But the play in its original form was practically finished some time in the summer of 1771; and on September 7 the author was back at his rooms in the Temple and writing in that letter which we have quoted in full to his friend Bennet Langton: "I have been almost wholly in the country at a farmer's house, quite alone, trying to write a comedy. It is now finished, but when or how it will be acted, or whether it will be acted at all, are questions I cannot resolve."

The misgivings which he had at this time were well founded. He considered that the fact of his having obtained from Colman a promise to read any play that he might write constituted an obligation on his part to submit this piece to Colman rather than to Garrick. He accordingly placed it in Colman's hands; but it is impossible to say if the work of elaborate revision which Goldsmith began in the spring of 1772 was due to the comments made by this manager on the first draft, or to the author's own reconsideration of his work as a whole. But the amended version was certainly in Colman's hands in the summer of this year (1772). The likelihood is that Colman would have refused point-blank to have anything to do with the comedy after he had read the first draft, had it not been that just at this time Goldsmith's reputation was increased to a remarkable extent by the publication of his *Histories*.

At any rate, Colman got the play—and kept it. He would give the author no straightforward opinion as to its prospects in his hands. He refused to say when he would produce it

—nay, he declined to promise that he would produce it at all. Goldsmith was thus left in torment for month after month, and the effect of the treatment that he received was to bring on a fresh attack of his illness, and the effect of his illness was to sink him into such depths of despondency as he had never before sounded. The story told by Cooke of his coming upon the unhappy man in a coffee-house, and of the latter's attempt to give him some of the details of the plot of the comedy, speaks for itself. "I shook my head," wrote Cooke, "and said that I was afraid the audience, under their then sentimental impressions, would think it too broad and farcical for comedy." This was poor comfort for the author; but after a pause he shook the man by the hand, saying piteously: "I am much obliged to you, my dear friend, for the candour of your opinion, but it is all I can do; for alas! I find that my genius, if ever I had any, has of late totally deserted me."

He had once had great hopes of good resulting from Colman's taking up the management of Covent Garden. A very different letter he had now to write to him from that in which he had congratulated him, and, incidentally, the English Drama, upon his entering into possession of the theatre. Colman had endeavoured to evade the responsibility of giving him a direct answer about the play. He clearly meant that the onus of refusing it should lie at the door of some one else.

"Dear sir," wrote the author in January 1773, "I entreat you'll release me from that state of suspense in which I have been kept for a long time. Whatever objections you have made or shall make to my play I will endeavour to remove and not argue about them. To bring in any new judges either of its merits or faults I can never submit to. Upon a former occasion when my other play was before Mr. Garrick he offered to bring me before Mr. Whitehead's tribunal, but I refused the proposal with indignation. I hope I shall not experience as hard treatment from you as from him. . . . For God's sake take the play and let us make the best of it, and let me have the same measure at least which you have given as bad plays as mine." Goldsmith had clearly sunk to the deepest depths before he wrote this letter to Colman. But this did not matter to Colman.

Upon receiving it he at once returned the manuscript of the play; and on the author's unfolding it he found that on the back of almost every page, on the blank space reserved for the prompter's hieroglyphs, some sneering criticism was scrawled. To emphasise this insult Colman had enclosed a letter to the effect that if the author was still unconvinced that the piece would be a failure, he, Colman, would produce it.

Immediately on receipt of this contemptible effort at contempt, Goldsmith packed up the play and sent it to Garrick at Drury Lane. That same evening, however, he met Johnson and told him what he had done; and Johnson, whose judgment on the practical side of authorship was rarely at fault, told him that he had done wrong and that he must get the manuscript back without delay, and submit to Colman's sneers for the sake of having the comedy produced. Upon Johnson's promising to visit Colman and to urge upon him the claims of Goldsmith to his consideration, the distracted author wrote to Drury Lane:

"Upon more mature deliberation and the advice of a sensible friend, I begin to think it indelicate in me to throw upon you the odium of confirming Mr. Colman's sentence. I therefore request that you will send my play by my servant back; for having been assured of having it acted at the other house, though I confess yours in every respect more to my wish, yet it would be folly in me to forego an advantage which lies in my power of appealing from Mr. Colman's opinion to the judgment of the town."

Goldsmith got back the play, and Johnson explained to him, as he did some years later to Reynolds, that the solicitations which he had made to Colman to put it in rehearsal without delay amounted almost to force. At any rate, the play was announced and the parts distributed to the excellent company which Colman controlled. The spirit in which he set about the discharge of his duplex *rôle* of prophet and manager—a sort of theatrical Melchizedek—was apparent to every one during the earliest rehearsals. Johnson, writing to an American correspondent, mentioned that Colman made no secret of his belief that the play would be a failure—far

from it: he seems to have taken the most extraordinary trouble to spread his belief far and wide; and when a manager adopts such a course, what chance, one may ask, has the play? What chance, the players could not but ask, have the players?

This was possibly the only occasion in the history of the English drama on which such questions could be asked. If managers have a fault at all—a point which is not yet ripe for discussion—it has never been in the direction of depreciating a play which they are about to produce—that is, of course, outside the author's immediate circle. It is only when the play has failed that they sometimes allow that it was a bad one, and incapable of being saved even by the fine acting of the company and the sumptuous mounting.

It might have been thought that Colman would have had sufficient acumen to perceive, from the extraordinary success that followed the production just at this time of Foote's entertainment founded on the Panton Street Exhibition and entitled *The Primitive Puppet Show*, the direction that was being taken by the taste of the public. It was understood that the proprietor of "the little house in the Haymarket" intended satirising the Sentimentalists, and no one was sure that Garrick himself was not to be brought on the stage as a representative of this school. A lady of quality inquired of Foote if the figures would be as large as life. "Oh no, my lady," he replied, "not much larger than Garrick."

Garrick himself was distinctly uneasy for some time; but of course Foote was brought to a momentary sense of decorum. Walpole, writing to Lady Ossory, said, "Garrick, by the negotiation of a Secretary of State, has made peace with Foote, and by the secret article of the treaty is to be left out of the puppet show." And when his mind was set at rest, he showed how clever he was by giving every one to understand that he was heart and soul on the side of the satirist—that, detesting sentimental comedy, "let the galled jade wince" his "withers were unwrung." While all London was laughing over Foote's puppet-play of *The Handsome Housemaid, or, Piety in Pattens*, "Showing how a Maiden of Low Degree, by the mere effects of Morality and Virtue, raised herself

to Riches and Honour," Garrick was busy writing the prologue for Goldsmith's play, the conceit of which was that Woodward, who was to speak it, should appear dressed in black and holding a handkerchief to his eyes, and exclaim, between his sobs, that "the Comic Muse long sick is now a-dying," and that

> To her a mawkish drab of spurious breed,
> Who deals in Sentimentals, will succeed!
> Poor Ned and I are dead to all intents;
> We can as soon speak Greek as Sentiments.

But he explains that

> One hope remains—hearing the maid was ill,
> A Doctor comes this night to shew his skill.
> To cheer her heart, and give your muscles motion,
> He, in Five Draughts prepar'd, presents a potion:
> A kind of magic charm—for be assur'd,
> If you will swallow it the maid is cur'd;
> But desperate the Doctor and her case is,
> If you reject the dose and make wry faces!
> This truth he boasts; will boast it while he lives,
> No pois'nous drugs are mix'd in what he gives;
> Should he succeed you'll give him his degree;
> If not, within he will receive no fee!
> The college you, must his pretensions back,
> Pronounce him Regular, or dub him Quack.

This was really a very clever move on the part of Mr. Garrick, and it is extraordinary that Colman had not the sense to perceive that it was the right move to make. The cat had jumped, and Garrick had seen on which side she had alighted.

Colman had not. He must have felt certain that the piece would be a failure or he would never have acted as he did. He controlled his company but too well. The effect of his sneering at the piece in their presence was quickly apparent, for after a day or two of rehearsals it was announced that the leading lady, the accomplished Frances Abington, had retired from the part of Miss Hardcastle; that Smith, known as "Gentleman Smith," had refused to play Young Marlow; and that Woodward, the most popular comedian in the theatre, had thrown up the part of Tony Lumpkin.

Here, in one day, it seemed that Colman had achieved his

aims, and the piece would have to be withdrawn by the author. This was undoubtedly the managerial view of the situation which had been precipitated by the manager; and it was shared only by those of the author's friends who understood his character as indifferently as did Colman. They must all have been somewhat amazed when the author quietly accepted the situation and affirmed that he would rather that his play were damned by bad players than merely saved by good acting. One of the company who had the sense to perceive the merits of the piece—his friend Shuter, who was cast for the part of old Hardcastle—advised him to give Lewes, the harlequin, the part of young Marlow; Quick, a great favourite with the public, was to act Tony Lumpkin, and, after a considerable amount of wrangling, Mrs. Bulkley, lately Miss Wilford, who had been the Miss Richland of *The Good-Natur'd Man*, accepted the part which the capricious Mrs. Abington had resigned.

Another start was made with the rehearsals of the piece, and further efforts were made by Colman to bring about the catastrophe which he had predicted. He refused to let a single scene be painted for the production, or to supply a single new dress; his excuse being that the money spent in this way would be thrown away, for the audience would never allow the piece to proceed beyond the second act.

But happily Dr. Johnson had his reputation as a prophet at stake as well as Colman, and he was singularly well equipped by Nature for enforcing his views on any subject. He could not see anything of what was going on upon the stage, but his laugh at the succession of humourous things spoken by the company must have had an inspiring effect upon every one—except Colman. Johnson's laugh was the strongest expression of appreciation of humour of which the century has a record. It was epic. To say that Johnson's laugh at the rehearsals of *She Stoops to Conquer* saved the piece, would, perhaps, be going too far. But can any one question its value as a counteracting agent to Colman's depressing influence on the stage during these rehearsals? Johnson was the only man in England who could make Colman (and every one else) tremble, and his laugh had the same effect upon the building in which it was delivered. It was the Sirocco against a wet blanket.

He it was who encouraged the company to do their best for the play, in spite of the fact that they were all aware that their doing their best for it would be resented by their manager.

Reynolds, also, another valuable friend to the author, sacrificed several of his busiest hours in order to attend the rehearsals. His sister's sacrifices to the same end were, perhaps, not quite so impressive, nor were those made by the ingenious Mr. Cradock. Miss Horneck and her sister bore testimony to the strength of their friendship for the poet, by accompanying him daily to the theatre.

But, after all, these good friends had not many opportunities of showing their regard for him in this way, for the play must have had singularly few rehearsals. Scarcely a month elapsed between the date of Colman's receiving the manuscript on its being returned by Garrick, and the production of the piece. It is doubtful if more than ten rehearsals took place after the parts were re-cast. If the manager kept the author in suspense for eighteen months respecting the fate of his play, he endeavoured to make up for his dilatoriness now. It was announced for Monday, March 15, and, according to Northcote, it was only on the morning of that day that the vexed question of what the title should be was settled. For some time the author and his friends had been talking the matter over. "We are all in labour for a name to Goldy's play," wrote Johnson. *The Mistakes of a Night*, *The Old House a New Inn*, and *The Belle's Stratagem* were suggested in turn. It was Goldsmith himself who gave it the title under which it was produced.

On the evening of this day, March 15, the author was the guest at a dinner-party organised in his honour. It is easy to picture this particular function. The truth was that Colman's behaviour had broken the spirit, not only of the author, but of the majority of his friends as well. They would all make an effort to cheer up poor Goldsmith; but every one knows how cheerless a function is that which is organised with such a cheerful intention. It is not necessary that one should have been in a court of law watching the face of the prisoner in the dock when the jury have retired to consider their verdict, in order to appreciate the feelings of Goldsmith when his friends made their attempt to cheer him up. The

last straw added on to the cheerlessness of the banquet was surely to be found in the accident that every one wore black! The King of Sardinia had died a short time before, and the Court had ordered mourning to be worn for some weeks in memory of this potentate. Johnson was very nearly outraging propriety by appearing in coloured raiment, but George Steevens, who called for him to go to the dinner, was, fortunately, in time to prevent such a breach of etiquette. "I would not for ten pounds have seemed so retrogade to any general observance," cried Johnson, in offering his thanks to his remembrancer. Happily the proprieties were saved; but what must have been the effect of the appearance of these gentlemen in black upon the person whom they meant to cheer up?

Reynolds told his pupil, Northcote, what effect these resources of gaiety had upon Goldsmith. His mouth became so parched that he could neither eat nor drink; nor could he so much as speak in acknowledgment of the well-meant act of his friends. When the party after this entertainment set out for the theatre, they must have suggested, all being in black, a more sombre procession than one is accustomed to imagine when conjuring up a picture of an eighteenth-century theatre-party.

And Goldsmith was missing!

Unfortunately Boswell was in Scotland, or we should not be left in doubt as to how it happened that no one thought of taking charge of Goldsmith. But no one seemed to think of him, and so his disappearance was never noticed. His friends arrived at the theatre and found their places, Johnson in the front row of the boxes; and the curtain was rung up, and Goldsmith was forgotten under the influence of that comedy which constitutes his claim to be remembered by theatre-goers of to-day.

He was found by an acquaintance a couple of hours later wandering in the Mall of St. James's Park, and was only persuaded to go to the theatre by its being represented to him that his services might be required should it be found necessary to alter something at the last moment.

Now, Cumberland was among the members of that distinguished audience. The author of *The West Indian* was,

of course, regarded as one of the leaders of the Sentimental school, the demise of which was satirised in the prologue. Cumberland was, as we have said, a man who could never see a particle of good in anything that was written by another. It was a standing entertainment with Garrick to "draw him on" by suggesting that some one had written a good scene in a play, or was about to produce an interesting book. In a moment Cumberland was up, protesting against the assumption that the play or the book could be worth anything. So wide a reputation had he for decrying every other author that, when Sheridan produced *The Critic; or, The Tragedy Rehearsed*, his portrait was immediately recognised in Sir Fretful Plagiary.

What must have been the feelings of this man when from the first the play, which, in spite of his assertions to the contrary, to which we shall presently refer, he had come to wreck, was received by the whole house with uproarious applause? Well, we do not know what he felt like, but we know what he looked like. One of the newspapers described him as "looking glum," and another contained a rhymed epigram describing him as weeping. Goldsmith entered the theatre by the stage-door, at the beginning of the fifth act, where Tony Lumpkin and his mother appear close to their own house, and the former pretends that the chaise has broken down on Crackskull Common. He had no sooner got into the "wings" than he heard a hiss. "What's that, sir?" he whispered to Colman, who was beside him. "Psha, sir! don't be afraid of a squib when we have been sitting these two hours on a barrel of gunpowder," was the reply. The story is well known, and its accuracy has never been impeached. And the next day it was understood that that solitary hiss came from Cumberland, the opinion that it was due to the malevolence of Macpherson, whose pretensions to the discovery of Ossian were exposed by Johnson, being discredited.

But the effect of Colman's brutality and falsehood into the bargain had not a chance of lasting long. The hiss was received with cries of "Turn him out!" and, with an addition to the tumultuous applause of all the house, Goldsmith must have been made aware in another instant of the fact that he

had written the best comedy of the day and that Colman had lied to him. From the first there had been no question of sitting on a barrel of gunpowder. Such applause could never greet the last act of a play the first four acts of which had been doubtful. He must have felt that at last he had conquered—that he had by one more achievement proved to his own satisfaction—and he was hard to satisfy—that those friends of his who had attributed genius to him had not been mistaken; that those who, like Johnson and Percy and Reynolds, had believed in him before he had written the works that made him famous, had not been misled.

The next day all London was talking of *She Stoops to Conquer* and of Colman. Horace Walpole, who detested Goldsmith, and who found when he went to see the play that it was deplorably vulgar, mentioned in a letter which he wrote to Lady Ossory on the morning after the production, that it had "succeeded prodigiously," and the newspapers were full of lampoons at the expense of the manager. If Colman had had the sense to keep to himself his forebodings of the failure of the piece, he would not have left himself open to these attacks; but, as has been said, he took as much pains to decry the coming production as he usually did to "puff" other pieces. It would seem that every one in town had for several days been talking about nothing else save the coming failure of Dr. Goldsmith's comedy. Only on this assumption can we now understand the poignancy of the "squibs"—some of them partook largely of the character of his own barrel of gunpowder—levelled against Colman. He must have been quite amazed at the clamour that arose against him; it became too much for his delicate skin, and he fled to Bath to get out of the way of the scurrilous humourists who were making him a target for their pop-guns. But even at Bath he failed to find a refuge. Writing to Mrs. Thrale, Johnson said, "Colman is so distressed with abuse that he has solicited Goldsmith to take him off the rack of the newspapers."

It was characteristic of Goldsmith that he should do all that was asked of him, and that he should make no attempt, either in public or in private, to exult in his triumph over the manager. The only reference which he made to his sufferings while Colman was keeping him on the rack, was in a letter

he wrote to his friend Cradock, who, in return for the prologue to *Zobeide*, had written an epilogue for the play, to explain how it was that this epilogue was not used at the first representation. After saying simply, "The play has met with a success beyond your expectation or mine," he makes his explanation, and concludes thus: "Such is the history of my stage adventure, and which I have at last done with. I cannot help saying that I am very sick of the stage, and though I believe I shall get three tolerable benefits, yet I shall on the whole be a loser, even in a pecuniary light; my ease and comfort I certainly lost while it was in agitation."

Goldsmith showed that he bore no grudge against Colman; but the English stage should bear Colman a grudge for his treatment of one of the few authors of real genius who have contributed to it for the benefit of posterity. If *She Stoops to Conquer* had been produced when it first came into the manager's hands, Goldsmith would certainly not have written the words just quoted. What would have been the result of his accepting the encouragement of its immediate production it is impossible to tell; but it is not going too far to assume that the genius which gave the world *The Good-Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer* would have been equal to the task of writing a third comedy equal in merit to either of these. Yes, posterity owes Colman a grudge; though in his prologue to *A Chapter of Accidents*, produced in 1780, he affirmed that, with *She Stoops to Conquer*,

> Nature and Mirth resum'd their legal sway,
> And Goldsmith's genius bask'd in open day.

Quite true; but no thanks to Colman.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER"

1773

MANY years after the production of *She Stoops to Conquer* Cumberland published in his *Memoirs* what purported to be a circumstantial account of the performance and of the incidents connected with it. He endeavoured to make out that the success of the piece was solely due to himself and to his organisation of a claque to pull it out of the fire to which it was doomed by reason of its badness. A more impudent piece of mendacity than Cumberland's narrative could scarcely be imagined. He pretended that he was the leading spirit at the dinner preceding the performance—that he was one of the author's staunch friends, Johnson and Reynolds and Steevens played parts quite subsidiary to his own in this transaction, and when it came to the actual saving of the piece, the triumph was due to what he called "our manœuvres"; these being the working of the full machinery of the professional claquer—the posting of a number of loud-voiced men in various parts of the house, who were to take from him the signal when to cheer. Owing to his forethought and the perfection of his organisation, the attempts of those who meant to wreck the piece were frustrated, and thus, through the extreme good nature of Cumberland, *She Stoops to Conquer* was allowed to proceed to its close.

This whole narrative is an impudent fabrication, the more impudent by reason of the air of a large-hearted and tolerant patronage of Goldsmith which pervades it. Everybody knew what was the character of Richard Cumberland. It was an agony to him to hear a good word said about any one but himself, and yet he would try to make the readers of his *Memoirs* believe that he put himself to all this trouble

on behalf of the author who was his most imminent and pronounced rival, and of the play which ridiculed him and the sentimentalists with whom he had banded himself! This would be rather too much to expect from Mr. Cumberland. Everybody knew that he wished to ingratiate himself with Colman, in view of future productions, and it was with this object he went to the theatre prepared to hiss—"willing to wound and yet afraid to strike," in the face of the success made by the play from the first. Only that one hiss did he venture upon; the disapprobation with which it was noticed made him shrink into his box, and content himself by "looking glum." Several newspapers referred to the disappointment on his face, and, as we have already mentioned, many squibs appeared upon the aspect of himself and Kelly. One of them was as follows:

> At Dr. Goldsmith's merry play
> All the spectators laugh they say;
> The assertion, sir, I must deny,
> For Cumberland and Kelly *cry*.

But at the very outset of his narrative Cumberland showed himself unworthy of confidence, for among the little company of the author's staunch friends who supported him at the dinner he includes FitzHerbert, who had committed suicide the previous year.

It does not need any one to go to a large amount of trouble to account for the success of *She Stoops to Conquer*. It succeeded because it contained all the elements of success. It required no saving by the exertions of Cumberland, or of Johnson or of young Northcote, Sir Joshua Reynolds's pupil, who was in the gallery and "laughing exceedingly"; or of the Honourable Miss Nugent, who must have exploded when she heard in the dialogue the reference made to the trick which she had once played with the author's wig. It is ludicrous to notice Cumberland's attitude, suggesting that the stage actually owed the existence of the play to his extraordinary benevolence. As if a piece that has been played thousands of times and that is still played with success, contained such distinct elements of failure as necessitated his heroic act of self-sacrifice to save it!

She Stoops to Conquer succeeded, not because of the part it played in the faction of the stage of the day, or in the fashion

of the hour, but because it was a true comedy of character and of action, and, above all, of nature. There is in it the substance of three distinct comedies; and the fact that one of the best scenes that it contains—that of the discovery by Mrs. Hardcastle of the loss of the jewels—has no bearing upon the fortunes of the hero or heroine, shows how prodigal the author was of his material. This is a comedy within a comedy. And then, quite apart from the actual foundation of the piece, which is, of course, the practical joke played upon the two gentlemen by Tony Lumpkin, there is the comedy of the character of Young Marlow—overwhelmed when he was to face a lady of fashion but on the easiest terms with a barmaid. In the operation of this humourous trait there is certainly the groundwork for a whole "plot." Incident is the soul of comedy, and *She Stoops to Conquer* is crowded with incident. And if incident is its soul, assuredly situation is its backbone, and on this assumption Goldsmith's play is fully vertebrate. There is an unusual but very effective situation developed, or in course of development, in every scene; and, best of all, the imagination of an audience is stimulated in every scene to anticipate what is coming; and yet what does come, comes with such a series of little surprises that one's attention, which is grasped at the outset, is never allowed to be diverted from the main course of the play. The comedy marches ahead from the first: it never marks time. The dialogue is ever to the point. Every phrase but adds to the impression one gains of the naturalness of the characters.

It seems to have been the fashion in Goldsmith's day to call every comedy that moved with rapidity—there were very few that could be so described—a farce. The exact scientific frontier of farce, eighteenth century or twentieth century, has never been accurately delimitated. *She Stoops to Conquer* was originally thought by Johnson and a good many other people to be too farcical to be termed a comedy. But the chances are that the most fastidious of playwriters would prefer having his piece succeed on account of its farcical elements than fail by reason of its leaning too much the other way, whether the signpost to the other way is labelled "true comedy" or not. The truth is that the people who pay to

go to a theatre care nothing for such labels. They would just as soon be amused by a farce as by a comedy. They do not feel ashamed of their laughter at the close of a scene when they are assured that it was a farcical scene and not a scene of true comedy. A good number of critics in Goldsmith's day, as well as in our own, resemble the good woman in Sheridan's *St. Patrick's Day; or, The Scheming Lieutenant*, who implored her husband not to submit to the disgrace of being cured by some one who is not a regular practitioner. With such people the designation of a play is everything. If this play of Goldsmith's is, after all, a farce, all that can be said is that it was a great pity that Garrick and Colman did not get some of their dreary comedy-writers to turn their attention to farce of the type of *She Stoops to Conquer*.

It is unnecessary in this place to do more than call attention to a faculty of Goldsmith's which we think has been overlooked by all his biographers; this is his extraordinary technical skill as a playwriter. From time to time we have heard a great deal—chiefly from authorities connected with the theatre—of the absolute necessity that exists for any one who hopes to write a play to serve an apprenticeship to the stage in order to master the amazing difficulties of its technicalities. We are assured that unless one has lived in that mystic region vaguely referred to as "behind the scenes," one cannot expect to be anything but a bungler. But here we find a comedy in which every scene is built up both as regards the dialogue and the situations in such a way as to produce effects of the most valuable sort, looked at from the standpoint of the theatre only. Almost every scene in the play is a good stage scene, and the technical knowledge displayed on such matters as "climax" and "letting the audience into the secret" cannot be denied. What actor could wish for a more effective entrance than is given to Tony Lumpkin in the first act? He is being fully discussed by his mother and stepfather. They are getting more emphatic every moment in their references to him, and the interest of the audience is increasing in proportion. The dialogue is becoming crisper and more curt. "We must not snub the poor boy now, for I believe we shan't have him long among us. Anybody that looks in his face may see he's consumptive,"

says the mother. "Aye, if growing too fat be one of the symptoms," growls her husband. "He coughs sometimes." "Yes, when his liquor goes the wrong way." "I'm actually afraid of his lungs." "And truly so am I; for he sometimes whoops like a speaking-trumpet (*Tony Lumpkin holloos behind the scenes*), aye, there he goes—a very consumptive figure, truly." And then Tony bounces in, and we know that, whatever may be the fate of the other characters, Tony Lumpkin is a success.

And when the game of cross-purposes begins—surely the most finished and the most natural ever put on the stage—one cannot but admire the adroitness with which it is managed. It was Goldsmith's way to bring in something of his own experience, whether he was writing an essay, a romance, or a play, so we are not surprised that, fresh from General Oglethorpe's description, done in wine on his dinner-table, he should make Mr. Hardcastle talk of Prince Eugene and Marlborough's wars and the Siege of Belgrade. But for genuine stagecraft nothing could surpass the management of the scene where, after Tony has taken the jewels, he suggests to his mother that she should pretend to Constance that she has mislaid them and call him as a witness, and then she discovers that what she meant to be a fiction is a fact. The moment she leaves the room to fetch her garnets we begin to laugh. To show a trickster tricked is the height of diversion. But the author goes further, and shows the tricksters of the trickster defeated by the simplest misunderstanding, and that not once but twice. The game of cross-purposes is maintained by a succession of the liveliest incidents, every one linked on to the other and not one in the least degree strained or unnatural. The play might have been written by some one who had served an apprenticeship to the craft of the stage, only that such a training does not always account for dialogue with the flavour of good literature about it.

One might sum up the piece by saying that, unless in the hands of so consummate a master of the art of the stage, such a plot as is made the groundwork of *She Stoops to Conquer*, would never run a chance of being accepted by even the least critical audience. Let any one write a synopsis of it, and one will soon see how artificially it reads. But we watch with

unflagging interest the dexterity with which the author drives his team through the innumerable obstacles which threaten disaster at every yard, and we feel that he succeeds in reaching his journey's end in safety by sheer skill. If the play is a farce there never was one that achieved success by fewer appeals to the credulity of an audience—there never was one that carries with it such an atmosphere of real life. Even reading it we do not feel that there is anything preposterous in the notion of a satisfactory courtship being begun and completed between dusk and supper-time; but, watching the play on the stage, the question as to the reasonableness of the notion never suggests itself. A delighted audience asks no questions on any point—certainly none as to the reasonableness of a rapid courtship.

She Stoops to Conquer is not a farce. It is a true comedy of manners, of character, and of human nature. It has never been performed without success; and it would be revived much more frequently than it has been recently if the actor-manager could only make up his mind whether to take the part of Mr. Hardcastle, Tony Lumpkin, Young Marlow, or Diggory.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AFTER THE COMEDY

1773

It was stated that the profits accruing to Goldsmith from the production of his second play amounted to between four hundred and five hundred pounds. Such an estimate is obviously too small and very much too small. He made five hundred pounds out of *The Good-Natur'd Man*, and yet that play was perilously close to a failure. Cooke must be nearer the truth in asserting that the profits reached eight hundred pounds. It was performed for the twelve available nights before the close of the season. The tenth was by Royal Command. During the summer Foote performed it at the "little house," and the following winter saw it at Covent Garden, where it was paid the unusual compliment of a second Command Night. It was almost immediately translated into German and French.

We have that perfect picture of the author and his friends together upon the night of the production of *The Good-Natur'd Man*, when it was taken for granted the piece had been a failure. We should like to have as a companion a picture of the same good company after the performance of *She Stoops to Conquer*. We may be pretty sure that the supper party upon this occasion was a good deal merrier than that which celebrated (as they thought) the failure of the author's first attempt at comedy—on the stage: he frequently attempted it in other directions. It could hardly have taken place at Sir Joshua's house in Leicester Fields, or young Mr. Northcote would have said something about it. It might not be going too far to suggest that the party was made up by the Hornecks and the rest of the "Devonshire crew," supplemented by an active contingent from Norfolk. The

Hornecks and the Bunburys we know stood by Goldsmith nobly at this time of his contest with the stupidity of Colman, and attended the rehearsals in a body, adding the elements of beauty and fashion to those of intellect and scholarship, represented by Reynolds and Johnson upon these occasions. It is said that the presence of so much unaccustomed brilliance in the theatre during the rehearsals so dazzled good Mr. Shuter that he failed now and again to remember his cues. He made no lapses on the night of the performance, however, and if it was not laid on him to do for the piece all that he did for the previous one by the same author, it is certain that his impersonation of Mr. Hardcastle was a fine one, and that the author testified to the gratitude he felt for his contribution to the success of the piece.

To Johnson, however, he owed more than to any one else in respect of *She Stoops to Conquer*, and he acknowledged his debt in the only way in his power. He had assigned the copyright of the play to Newbery, and when it was printed the Dedication was found to be "To Samuel Johnson, LL.D."

"I have, particularly, reason to thank you for your partiality to this performance," he wrote in the second of the two paragraphs of the Dedication. "The undertaking a Comedy, not merely sentimental, was very dangerous; and Mr. Colman, who saw this piece in its various stages, always thought it so. However, I ventured to trust it to the public; and though it was necessarily delayed till late in the season, I have every reason to be grateful."

This tribute was the least which he could have offered to the man who had not only given him the best possible advice in respect of it, but had actually been able to exercise upon Colman such a form of compulsion for its production as no one else in England could have brought to bear upon him with the same result.

Boswell, coming to town from Scotland a few days after the production, must have been still further surprised at the increase of Goldsmith's fame during his absence. If he had been more talked of than all the officers, except generals, who had taken part in the wars, after the publication of his *Histories*, assuredly after the representation of his comedy, his importance

as a topic had increased, so as to surpass even that of the generals. He had previously been acknowledged as the author of the two best poems, the two best histories, and the best work of fiction, the only direction in which his pre-eminence had not been fully established was that of the stage; and now that the success of his comedy had marked his conquest of this realm also, Boswell was amazed, but not so much as he would have been had he been able to rid his mind of that singular notion which he had early acquired, that Johnson had written much of what was attributed to Goldsmith. There can be no doubt that Boswell really had this belief, and retained it to the day of his death. Every now and again we find suggestions of it in his *Life of Johnson*. Sometimes he gives a sly hint of it, with a little smirk, and more than once he tells of his approaching Johnson with this same little twinkle of extraordinary shrewdness, to hint at his discovery of Johnson's hand in something that Goldsmith has done, and of his being rebuffed by the great man. So obsessed was he by the tremendous personality of Johnson that it is plain to see he attributed Johnson's denials of his innuendoes, to his good-nature, and he continued to believe that Johnson inspired those works of Goldsmith which he did not actually write. It will be seen a little later, that, even in regard to the letter which Goldsmith wrote to the *Daily Advertiser* in relation to his attack upon Evans, Boswell assumed that this also had been the composition of Johnson, though the latter condemned the writing of such a letter.

But it was doubtless owing to the position which the name of Goldsmith now held in the estimation of the world, that a dreadful fear laid hold of Boswell. He had seen that—by the help of Johnson—Goldsmith had written the most successful histories, poems, and play, and what if his ambition should lead him on to make the attempt—by the help of Johnson—to write the most interesting biography?

The effect of this terrible suggestion which came to him must have been visible to most of his associates at this time, though they may not have been able to account for it, unless they had seen him jotting down all the precious phrases that fell from Johnson's lips. It is, at any rate, plain in all his references to Goldsmith about this period, that he had been

living in great trepidation lest some day Johnson should announce to him that he had entrusted his friend Goldsmith with the materials necessary for writing his life, and that, in view of the uncertainties of all terrestrial things, the work was to be begun at once. Holy Week had scarcely ended (a fortnight after the production of *She Stoops to Conquer*) before we find him warning Johnson of the looseness of Goldsmith's religious principles. Johnson, it would appear, had had Goldsmith as one of his most intimate friends for several years, and yet stood in need of being enlightened in regard to his religious principles. We have already mentioned in dealing with the attitude of Boswell in regard to Goldsmith, his going to Johnson with the story of Goldsmith's having told him that, just as he took his shoes from the shoemaker and his coat from his tailor, so he took his religion from his priest. He left it for Johnson himself to decide if this was the sort of man to do credit to such a theme for a biography as he had in his mind. Boswell himself was fully competent to speak decisively on the subject of religion, for he had sampled several. He had been in turn a Presbyterian, a Papist, an Atheist, and a Churchman. Finally he became a Johnsonian, and died in that faith, and, according to Percy, of its effects.

A few days later, he tells us, some one in the company asked if the King intended going to see *She Stoops to Conquer*. "I wish he would," exclaimed the author, but after a moment's reflection, he added, "Not that it would do me the least good." "Well, then, sir," said Johnson, "let us say it would do *him* good. No, sir, this affectation will not pass; it is mighty idle. In such a state as ours, who would not wish to please the chief magistrate?" "I do wish to please him," replied Goldsmith. "I remember a line in Dryden:

> And every poet is the Monarch's friend.

It ought to be reversed."

Then Boswell hastens to record Goldsmith's saying something distinctly Jacobite in its tendency. "Happy rebellions," some one had exclaimed, and Goldsmith had said that the phrase did not exist in English. "But have you not the thing?" asked Paoli. "Yes," responded Goldsmith. "All our happy revolutions. They have hurt our

constitution and will hurt it, till we remedy it by another happy revolution."

Now here we have Boswell blowing hot and cold. He tries to make out that it was a silly piece of affectation on Goldsmith's part to pretend that he was indifferent whether the King came to his play or not, and yet a moment later he is trying to make out that Goldsmith was a Jacobite, and as such, not recognising the sovereignty of the King to whom he had referred. Then without putting in the requisite link in the conversation, he goes on to state that Paoli remarked that Goldsmith in his play had paid a very gracious compliment to a certain great lady; his allusion being to Hastings' remark that in France "even among slaves the laws of marriage are respected." This was, of course, a hit at the Royal Marriage Act, passed by the King the previous year on account of the Duke of Gloucester's having acknowledged Lady Waldegrave as his wife. At the performance of the play the allusion called for an outburst of cheering directed toward the box in which the Duke of Gloucester sat.

Goldsmith did not reply to Paoli's suggestion; but Boswell was determined to force him to go further than he had yet done in his opposition to the reigning sovereign, and so expressed a doubt if the author had actually meant the words to be taken as an allusion to the Marriage Act. But the author refused the impertinent challenge, and only smiled in response. Paoli, seeing through the whole affair, then said, "Monsieur Goldsmith est comme la mer, qui jette des perles et beaucoup d'autres belles choses sans s'en apercevoir." "Très bien dit, et très élégamment!" cried the author.

But it must be plain to every one that what Boswell omits is the most important part of the conversation, and that is the link between the talk about the possibility of the King's going to see the play and Paoli's remark about the gracious compliment paid to the distinguished lady who had wedded *en secondes noces*, the Duke of Gloucester. It seems quite apparent that Paoli's remark had been led up to by some one saying that, whether or not the King's going to see Goldsmith's play would do the author any good, the author had done

his best to prevent the likelihood of the King's patronage being given to him, by the introduction of a sneer at the piece of legislation which his Majesty had insisted on being passed. Any one certainly might have made such a remark, or Goldsmith might have made it himself, if he had been anxious to show that, whatever any one else in the company might have been, he at any rate had been consistent.

It cannot be said that the honour which came to Goldsmith by the success of his comedy was diminished by an incident which took place in connection with it a few days before Boswell's return to London.

One of the most brutal and scurrilous libels that Kenrick, the master of venom and vulgarity, had ever written, appeared in the London *Packet*. It took the form of a letter, and its style was formed upon that of Junius. It must have been apparent to every one that the writer's aim was to emulate the virulence and violence of that mysterious Fury, who was terrorising ministers and making the Court tremble. The writer in the *Packet* who signed himself "Tom Tickle," after referring to Goldsmith's "monkey face" and "cloven hoof," and adding, "Your poetic vanity is as unpardonable as your personal. Would men believe it and will women bear it, to be told that for hours the great Goldsmith will stand surveying his grotesque Oran-hotan's figure in a pier-glass? Was but the lovely H——k as much enamoured, you would not sigh, my gentle swain, in vain. But your vanity is preposterous. How will this same bard of Bedlam ring the changes in praise of Goldy!"

So the stuff was continued, the vilest abuse being heaped upon the author's poems and plays, concluding with a diatribe about *She Stoops to Conquer* which is hysterical in its malevolence.

Goldsmith had arrived at the Hornecks' to dine, and found the whole family in a state of the greatest indignation at the scurrilous letter. It was not much worse than some others that had been penned by the same hand against him, but to which he had made no reply. This one, however, contained a paragraph such as no man would disregard. It introduced the name of the charming girl whose family had shown Goldsmith such kindness as he had valued more deeply than

all the praise he had received from the rest of the world. He could not but feel that he was the means of having her name held up to ridicule by associating it with his, and he took a step that every man of honour was bound to take in the circumstances.

Cradock in telling the story says, "he agonised all dinner-time, but as soon as possible afterwards he stole away." Taking with him a friend—a certain Captain H——, which may mean either Captain Horneck or an Irish acquaintance mentioned in the *Haunch of Venison*, Captain Higgins—he hurried to the office of the *Packet* and inquired for the publisher. The publisher was a Welsh adventurer named Thomas Evans—he was no relation to the bookseller of that name—and the moment that Goldsmith told him that he had called about the libellous letter, he pretended that he had never heard of it, but would make inquiries respecting it. He had turned away, when Goldsmith, perceiving that he meant to evade his responsibility, cried out, "You know well enough, you rascal, what I mean!" and struck him across the shoulders with his cane. In an instant the man had turned upon him, and struck him on the face, and in the struggle between the two, a lamp was knocked down and deluged them both with oil. But the troubled waters were not to be smoothed thus, and further blows were exchanged, until a man who had been looking out of the window of an inner office, at last rushed out and separated the combatants, Goldsmith's friend, "Captain H——" taking him away in a hackney coach.

The man who had been a spectator of the scuffle through the window was Kenrick himself.

Within the next few days the action taken by Goldsmith was resented by nearly all the newspapers. The wretched blackmailers who would not have been able to exist for a month without their levies upon innocent people whom they threatened to hold up to ridicule or contempt, were up in arms at the prospect that awaited them if the example shown by Goldsmith were to be followed by other men of equal manliness. The hucksters of venom saw that their occupation was threatened, and forthwith raised the howl that the liberty of the Press was in danger, and Goldsmith was made the object of the vituperation of the blackguard gang.

Evans was encouraged—if he stood in any need of encouragement—by their support, and indicted his assailant for assault. Some of Goldsmith's, and, possibly, the Hornecks' friends, came forward, however, and he withdrew the charge on the offer to hand fifty pounds to some Welsh charity.

A few days afterwards the *Daily Advertiser* published a letter from him, stating in a straightforward manner what was his attitude in regard to the calumniating crew who did their foul work of knifing innocent men and women under the shield of the liberty of the Press.

"Lest it should be supposed that I have been willing to correct in others an abuse of which I have been guilty myself, I beg leave to declare, that in all my life I never wrote, or dictated, a single paragraph, letter, or essay in a newspaper, except a few moral essays, under the character of a Chinese, about ten years ago, in the *Ledger*, and a letter to which I signed my name in the *St. James's Chronicle*. If the liberty of the press, therefore, has been abused, I have had no hand in it.

"I have always considered the press as the protector of our freedom, as a watchful guardian, capable of uniting the weak against the encroachments of power. What concerns the public most properly admits of a public discussion. But of late, the press has turned from defending public interest, to making inroads upon private life, from combating the strong, to overwhelming the feeble. No condition is now too obscure for its abuse, and the protector is become the tyrant of the people. In this manner the freedom of the press is beginning to sow the seeds of its own dissolution; the great must oppose it from principle, and the weak from fear; till at last every rank of mankind shall be found to give up its benefits, content with security from its insults.

"How to put a stop to this licentiousness, by which all are indiscriminately abused, and by which vice consequently escapes in the general censure, I am unable to tell; all I could wish is, that as the law gives us no protection against the injury, so it should give calumniators no shelter after having provoked correction. The insults, which we receive before the public, by being more open, are the more distressing, by treating them with silent contempt, we do not pay

a sufficient deference to the opinion of the world. By recuring to legal redress, we too often expose the weakness of the law, which only serves to increase our mortification by failing to relieve us. In short, every man should singly consider himself as a guardian of the liberty of the press, and, as far as his influence can extend should endeavour to prevent its licentiousness becoming at last the grave of its freedom.

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH."

This is the letter to which we have alluded as having been attributed by Boswell to Johnson. The former tells us all about it himself. He went to Johnson's house late in the evening, and sat with Mrs. Williams until Johnson came in and said to the lady, "Well, Dr Goldsmith's manifesto has got into your paper." "I asked him," continued Boswell, "if Dr. Goldsmith had written it, with an air that made him suspect that it was his, though subscribed by Goldsmith." At which Johnson said, "Sir, Dr. Goldsmith would no more have asked me to write such a thing as that for him, than he would have asked me to feed him with a spoon or to do anything else that denoted his imbecility. I as much believe that he wrote it as if I had seen him do it. Sir, had he shown it to any one friend he would not have been allowed to publish it. He has, indeed, done it very well, but it is a foolish thing well done. I suppose he has been so much elated with the success of his new comedy that he has thought everything that concerned him must be of importance to the public." Boswell remarked, "I fancy, sir, that this is the first time he has been engaged in such an adventure," to which Johnson replied, "Why, sir, I believe it is the first time he has *beat;* he may have *been beaten* before. This, sir, is a new plume to him."

How any one capable of pronouncing an opinion on any subject could suggest that Goldsmith's writing that letter was a foolish thing is past the comprehension of man. And as for the suggestion that Goldsmith had come to think that anything that concerned himself must be of importance to the public, all that one can say is that it was not Goldsmith but the newspapers that acted in accordance with that belief. The newspapers had attacked him in a phalanx, and will

any one say that he was not justified in writing such a letter —surely the mildest that any man ever wrote in similar circumstances—as that which Johnson thought so foolish a thing? As a matter of fact was not such an incident as the insult offered to Goldsmith in that Junius letter in the *Packet* and the retaliation by Goldsmith, of "importance to the public"? The newspapers were quite right in looking on it as such, and Goldsmith was only following their lead. Johnson's sneer—according to Boswell—suggesting the likelihood of Goldsmith's having at some time been beaten, has caused commentators some perturbation, for they assumed that he had in his mind some previous encounter in which Goldsmith had been engaged and in which he had been worsted. It seems to us unnecessary to draw any such conclusion from Johnson's words. He might have said the same about any one who had given another a caning. The fact that he regarded the part played by Goldsmith in doing the beating as a new plume to him, indicates pretty plainly that the general idea that prevailed was that Goldsmith got the upper hand in the fight, though it would appear from the account given by Cradock and Percy of the affair, that Goldsmith's plumage suffered somewhat in the actual encounter. Of course, Johnson could hardly regard the attack upon Evans as highly reprehensible, considering the action which he himself had taken in view of Foote's mimicking him, and also in regard to Mr. Macpherson, who had invented *Ossian*. The giant who goes about with an oak club to use against his detractors, can scarcely be hard on a pygmy with a cane. Johnson it was who confessed that he had knocked down a bookseller with one of his own folios, because he considered that the man had been impertinent; so we may be sure that his sympathies were with Goldsmith, and that he regarded Evans as an eminently "caneable," if not a "clubable" man. It is probable that if he had gone in Goldsmith's spirit to resent such an attack as that in the *Packet*, the sequel would have been less lively than it was in the case of Goldsmith.

It did not take long for the news of the encounter with Evans to reach his friends. We learn from Percy's Diary that before he had time to wash the blood from his face, Garrick and Beauclerk called upon him, and what did this

pair of *farceurs* do but induce him to accompany them to the Club, *just as he was*—" to show the world how little affected he was by the encounter." He remained only a short time at the Club, and he apologised for going away, saying that he was afraid he was making the company melancholy. His suggestion was received with a roar of the laughter which the members present must have been making almost superhuman efforts to repress from the moment of his entrance, with his seamed face and soiled coat.

But there can be no doubt that the general idea was that Goldsmith had behaved very well in this business of Evans; for we find the Hornecks as closely attached to him as ever, and Garrick so friendly toward him as to call for the rebuke of some of the actor's old friends, who had once joined with him in sneering at the poet. One of them, who had expectations from Drury Lane, wrote, " You seem now to give in to Goldsmith's ridiculosity in opposition to all sentimentality." Of course that is just what Garrick was doing. He was a capable manager, and had his finger on the pulse of the public. Moreover, he had his eye on The Club, and he had been given a hint that if he behaved well, he might be elected when the next vacancy occurred, and in spite of the machinations of Boswell, who played with great skill the part of the mischief-maker in a girls' school, telling Garrick what Johnson and the others had said about him, and no doubt " rubbing in " to Johnson the effect which Garrick's mimicry of him had upon the admiring circle, Garrick was duly elected—Goldsmith seconding his nomination, a few days before the production of his comedy; but we doubt very much if even then the actor refrained from those inimitable imitations of his old schoolmaster. If he did, the gaiety of a good many of their friends was certainly eclipsed. What would we not give to have seen him doing the part of Johnson as the ardent lover, or as the genial host squeezing, with countless contortions, a lemon into a punch-bowl and calling out in the patois of Lichfield, " Who's for poonch ? " But most excruciating of all must have been his copy of Johnson's most characteristic contortions—swinging his arms about and then bending his body so that, with his pendulous arm, his fingers almost touched the ground. This extraordinary movement Garrick

would imitate, with Johnson's customary twitchings and jerks and pursings out of his lips, blowing in a sort of whistle through them while he delivered the lines from Ovid's *Metamorphoses:*

> Os homini sublime dedit—cælumque tueri
> Jussit—et erectos ad sidera—tollere vultus,

keeping his eyes fixed on the floor all the time. It is not surprising to hear that the onlookers were overwhelmed with laughter, and implored him to stop.

No doubt Johnson heard through Boswell of Garrick's fun at this time, for we may be pretty sure that Boswell was not particularly well pleased at the idea of the great actor being elected to the Club in advance of himself. We have already referred to the patronising tone he assumed in this connection, affirming that Garrick really behaved quite like a gentleman while a member of "our Club." If Johnson heard about Garrick's mimicry he might not be disposed to regard it any more leniently than he did the prospect of Foote's; hence his frequent outbursts against Garrick, carefully chronicled by Boswell. It is in respect of these records that we are convinced a great injustice is done to Johnson. If Boswell had just come to him with one of his stories of how Garrick had convulsed a company by such mimicry as we have described, it would only be natural for Johnson to decry Garrick. But Boswell records Johnson's sneer, he says nothing about the story of Garrick's impudence with which he had just come to Johnson. "How odd to tell the man!" was the marginal note made by Mrs. Piozzi opposite Boswell's account of his tale-bearing in one case—it was in regard to what Johnson had said of him at the Thrales'. She should have known Boswell better than to see anything odd in his "clashing." He was a born "clasher," and was doubtless called so many times by his own countrymen.

It is in his record of some of the conversations about Garrick at this time—when the actor had been admitted, or was at the point of being admitted to the envied Club—that Boswell shows Johnson to be most intolerant of him. His vanity was discussed at the Thrales' at dinner, and Johnson pretended to justify it, saying that he received enough praise

to turn any man's head; but a few days later at the Oglethorpes', on Goldsmith saying that it was "mean and gross" on the part of Garrick to introduce some lines into a play of Beaumont and Fletcher's in order to flatter the Queen, Johnson is reported to have cried: "As to meanness, sir, how is it mean in a player, a showman, a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling, to flatter his Queen?"

Goldsmith's friendship with the Oglethorpes, where this conversation and others already mentioned took place, is shown by the fact of his having dined with them twice within a fortnight. At the first dinner we hear of his distinguishing himself by singing Tony Lumpkin's song *The Three Jolly Pigeons* and the Irish melody to which he had put words, intending it to be sung by the representative of Miss Hardcastle in the comedy. It was doubtless through having heard it upon the occasion of this dinner that Boswell asked him for a copy, which, years afterwards, he sent to Percy so that it might be included in the complete edition of the works.

It is certain that Goldsmith possessed more skill as a vocalist than was merely necessary to obtain applause among his associates at the Wednesday Club. Upon one occasion when he was drinking tea with some ladies, a ballad singer in the street outside was heard floundering through a song of which he was very fond. He remarked how wretched the performance was, and on his hostess's challenging him to improve upon it, he astonished the company by the admirable way in which he sung it. He had, of course, a personal interest in the performance of ballad singers since his college days in Dublin, when he had listened to his own productions sung in the streets. It may have been his recollection of previous and more acute agonies that caused him when engaged at cards at Sir William Chambers' one night, suddenly to throw down his hand, hurry from the room to pay off one of these same metre ballad mongers. It was not until some time had elapsed that his host inquired if he had found the room so hot as to compel him to rush into the street. "Not at all," he replied, "but in truth, I could not bear to hear that unfortunate woman half singing, half sobbing; for such tones could only arise from the extremity of distress. Her voice

grated painfully on my ear and jarred my frame, so that I could not rest until I had sent her away."

It can easily be believed that when it got noised abroad that Dr. Goldsmith was so extremely sensitive, his movements were watched with great interest by vocalists who flattered themselves on possessing the necessary qualification for jarring his frame, and being sent off with half a crown in their hand. It is very doubtful if the genial Mr. Oakman who sent him a complimentary poem a few days after the production of *She Stoops to Conquer* was much better than one of these people. His verses were found amongst Goldsmith's papers after his death.

Quite sick in her bed Thalia was laid,
A sentiment puke had quite kill'd the sweet maid,
Her bright eyes lost all of their fire;
When a regular Doctor, one Goldsmith by name,
Found out her disorder as soon as he came,
And has made her (for ever 'twill crown all his fame)
As lively as one can desire.

Oh! Doctor, assist a poor bard who lies ill,
Without e'er a nurse, e'er a potion, or pill;
From your kindness he hopes for some ease.
You're a "good-natur'd man" all the world does allow;
O would your good nature but shine forth just now,
In a manner—I'm sure your good sense will tell how,
Your servant most humbly 'twould please.

There was a postcript to this missive, and it was quite as important—to the writer—as anything in his rhymes:

"The bearer is the author's wife, and an answer from Dr. Goldsmith by her, will be ever gratefully acknowledged by his humble servant John Oakman.

"Orange Court, Swallow Street,
"Carnaby Market.
"Saturday, March 27, 1773."

The artful writer may have made a good living by addressing complimentary verses to the author of every successful play produced both at Covent Garden and Drury Lane; or indeed, so adroitly does he make his appeal, it may not be going too far to suggest that he extended his congratulations to the ladies and gentlemen who had contributed to the success of

the play: so clever a mendicant would have had no trouble in embodying in his verses a hint that, without the services of Mr. ——, or Mrs. ——, the author would have cut a very sorry figure.

However this may be, it can, we think, be taken for granted that Mr. Oakman received from the author of *She Stoops to Conquer* such a reply to his application as encouraged him to persevere in that branch of the begging business which he had adopted. It was his readiness in responding to such messages that was leaving Goldsmith penniless, and sinking deeper and deeper in debt, in spite of the fact that he was earning more money by his pen than any literary man in England.

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CHAPTER XXXV

"ANIMATED NATURE"

1773

It was during the few weeks that elapsed before Johnson's departure for the Hebrides we find him—according to Boswell—saying the hardest things about Goldsmith. There was the dinner-party at the Dilly's which we have already described—Johnson had told him that he was impertinent, but had apologised for it later in the evening—and there were other occasions on which he talked of the abnormally narrow range of Goldsmith's knowledge. Any attentive reader of the *Life of Johnson* must feel inclined to wonder how it was that Johnson, after so long an acquaintance with Goldsmith, and after showing himself to be Goldsmith's best friend and most ardent admirer, should only now become sensible of his numerous deficiencies, both of character and knowledge. All the stranger would it seem when one reflects upon the fact that it was only now that Goldsmith had won his position of supremacy in the four departments of literature in which he had laboured.

Mrs. Piozzi is, however, good enough to give us a short account of a conversation which she had with Johnson just at this time, on the subject of the possible writing of a biography of himself. "Who will be my biographer do you think?" Johnson asked. "Goldsmith, no doubt," cried Mrs. Thrale, "and he will do it the best among us." "The dog would write it best, to be sure," said Johnson, "but his particular malice towards me and general disregard of truth would make the book useless to all and injurious to my character."

This little conversation indicates that the question of a biography was being discussed; and it is safe to assume that rumours of it now and again reached the very attentive ears

of Mr. Boswell; and the way in which he constantly refers in his *Life* to Mrs. Thrale—she had already published *Memoirs* of Johnson—gives us a very good hint as to how it came about that only when Goldsmith had achieved his greatest success as a writer did Johnson find it necessary to say so many hard things about him. It becomes perfectly plain that Boswell was doing his best to make mischief between Johnson and Goldsmith, just as he did his best to make mischief between Johnson and Garrick. He went to Goldsmith and, with the cunning of one of the collies of his native land in directing the course of the flock of which he is in charge, shepherded the conversation to a point when Goldsmith, most probably in his ironical way, must say something that was susceptible of being interpreted into a statement reflecting upon Johnson; then off he would go to Johnson and tell him, *in his own way*, what Goldsmith had said *in his way*, the result being that Johnson would say something scornful of Goldsmith, and, what the mischief-monger thought was better still, become more and more impressed with the fact that Goldsmith would make a very indifferent biographer, pre-eminent though he might be as a writer. Mrs. Piozzi's story may be accepted as a proof of how successful Boswell had been in his scheming. He had just been to Johnson with the tale of how Goldsmith had endeavoured to ridicule the idea of that trip to the Hebrides to which Johnson stood committed.

It is unnecessary to enter into a consideration of the question whether Johnson's estimate of Goldsmith as his possible biographer was correct or incorrect. Much more important to us are the facts bearing upon the question, not of the possible biography of Johnson by Goldsmith, but of the possible biography of Goldsmith by Johnson. The materials for the latter had, we know, been transferred to Johnson by Percy, to whom they had been entrusted; and Johnson cared so little for them that he carried them away from his house and into some tavern, where he left them lying without a clue to their ownership, and forgot all about them. It is only necessary to say, before dismissing this question of biographies and biographers, that, however malicious a *Life of Johnson* would have been if done by Goldsmith, who never wrote a malicious line in all his life, it would never have been

said of Goldsmith that he took so light a view of his duties either as a historian or biographer as might cause him to be the means of depriving the world of a work which could not but have been of the greatest interest to all classes of readers.

He must have continued working at his *Animated Nature* and the *History of Greece* for which he had been commissioned by the booksellers, while his play was being produced and while he was recovering from the effects of his fracas with Evans. He had received every penny which he was to be paid for the former, and a further advance of £250 on account of the *Greece* is recorded in the June of this year (1773). But long before this date his accounts with Davies and Griffin had got into a hopeless condition of tangle, and if these gentlemen fancied that his gain of £800 from the comedy would give them a chance of straightening things out, they quickly were made aware of the fact that, with all their experience of him, they knew very little of Oliver Goldsmith. It is likely, however, that the pressure they put upon him at this time to allow of their balancing their books, was due to their laying their heads together and saying that if they did not square up with him now they would never be able to do so.

They were quite right; they did not square up with him, and they had never another chance.

He had spent all the money they had advanced to him, and the splendid profits of the production of *She Stoops to Conquer* melted away, no one knew how. He had nothing to show for all his expenditure. He was hopeless in money matters, and he was actually better off when he was drudging away for Griffiths on a pound a week than he was now, when his earnings for the year must have been little short of twelve hundred pounds—representing upwards of £2600 of our money.

But it is easy to see how the booksellers regarded his case. The early weakness of Griffin in making a substantial advance before he had done any work whatsoever, had been followed by the most deplorable results, and now the tradesmen's dilemma is apparent. Goldsmith had no money, and without money he could not, of course, live to do the work for which he had been paid. If they had denied him further advances, the books which he was writing would not have advanced.

They knew that their only hope of getting the books out of his hands was to provide him with the means of finishing them.

Davies hints at there having been an appeal to arbitration, Dr. Johnson being appointed umpire and deciding against Goldsmith. Davies says that Goldsmith was very angry, and thought it outrageous that one author should side with the booksellers against a brother author. This is not surprising. An arbitrator is usually a man who reconciles two of his friends who have fallen out, and immediately becomes an enemy of both. But the decision of an arbitrator in Goldsmith's case was a mere matter of form. The booksellers could not make a penniless man repay them anything.

No, but they could refuse to have any further speculative dealings with such a man; and this, it would appear, was the course which they determined to adopt in respect of him. He was anxiously looking out for the means of obtaining a further advance, and he came upon two excellent and very promising schemes, but when he submitted them to the booksellers he found that they would have nothing to do with him. They would, no doubt, have liked to make some money by the realisation of his schemes, but the risk of employing so unbusiness-like a workman as Goldsmith was too great for them to face any longer. The compiling of the works which he suggested, would occupy years, and they were not prepared to finance an author who could not manage to live on £1200 a year. They knew that the starting of such a colossal work as he had in his mind meant placing in his hands the handle of a pump—the pump of a golden stream: he would use it to pump the money out of them, as he had used the *Animated Nature*, which was still lying unfinished in his desk. They looked on him as hopeless; and they refused to have anything further to do with him, directing all their energy upon the business of getting out of his hands the work for which in a moment of weakness they had paid him. They were business men now. Previously they had been generous.

A Popular Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences was the title of the scheme which he had now devised. He wrote a prospectus for it, and his design was to obtain the co-operation of his many friends as contributors on whatever subjects they thought fit, so that he himself would be more in the position

of the editor than of the author, of the work. Garrick promised to contribute to it—he was a man of the world, and he knew that encouraging a sanguine man entailed no unpleasant consequences upon himself; he had a pretty shrewd idea that nothing would come of the matter. He also got Dr. Burney to promise a contribution, and wrote to him: "My dear Doctor, I have sent you a letter from Dr. Goldsmith. He is proud to have your name among the elect." Reynolds and Johnson were also to assist in filling the *Dictionary*.

His making out the list of "the elect," to borrow Garrick's words, was all of no avail. Davies explained the position of "the trade" quite soundly. They thought well of the enterprise, but they would not risk their money with Dr. Goldsmith. This was in regard to the *Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences*. The *Experimental Philosophy* scheme upon which he had been dwelling for some time, does not seem to have ever reached the prospectus stage. He was quite full of the plans for the *Dictionary* when Cradock paid him a visit. His imagination enabled him to see the conclusion of the work; but the imagination of the booksellers was not quite so obliging. He assured Cradock that he had put some of his best writing into the prospectus, and no doubt he had. Upon one occasion he had complained bitterly to the same friend of being compelled to turn out a volume a month; but if the booksellers could have been sure that he would turn out a volume a year of his *Dictionary*, they would have accepted his proposals with enthusiasm. Doubtless he spoke to Griffin about his production and Griffin asked him where his *Animated Nature* was. He had been engaged upon this book for several years, and had written half a dozen volumes of history in the meantime, and yet *Animated Nature* was in a condition of suspended animation. What right had he to waste his time over new and elaborate schemes before he had fulfilled the obligation into which he had entered with his eyes open years before? That is what Griffin would have asked him, and Griffin would have been right.

But he was undoubtedly giving some time to his *Animated Nature*—when he could spare it from his *History of Greece* and the correspondence that his preparation for the *Dictionary* entailed. So much in earnest was he that no time should be

lost over it that, upon one occasion, when he had been unavoidably detained with a pleasure party at Windsor, he entreated Percy and Cradock to come to his rooms in the Temple to complete some of the proofs which he had left upon his desk. Cradock gives a description of his rooms at this time; they were a perfect litter of books on natural history—the expensive volumes to which he refers in the Introduction to his work—and partly corrected proof-sheets. Cumberland, too, had his "recollections" of visiting him at this time, and affirms that he was able to show him "the beginning of his *Animated Nature*." He adds that he did so with a sigh "such as genius draws when hard necessity diverts it from its bent, to drudge for bread and talk of birds and beasts and creeping things, which Pidcock's showman would have done as well." "Poor fellow!" cries the sympathetic Cumberland, "he hardly knew an ass from a mule, nor a turkey from a goose, but when he saw it on the table."

Clumsy as ever in his inventions was the sympathetic Cumberland. He should have known that at this time nearly three years had elapsed since Goldsmith had been engaged at the beginning of his work. It had gone to the printers long before. And as for the poor fellow who hardly knew an ass from a mule, and who wrote a book which Pidcock's showman could have done as well, all that we can say is that it is a great pity that he did not give this visitor of his a chance of glancing at some other parts of the work besides the beginning; and that it is also a great pity that Cumberland, who wrote his "recollections" years after the work had been published in its complete form, did not avail himself of the opportunity thereby afforded him of refreshing his memory in respect of the contents, if only for the sake of giving his "recollections" the semblance of accuracy. Cumberland's attempts to belittle Goldsmith can hardly be called ingenious. That belittling by an expression of friendliness is one of the cheapest and most transparent forms of depreciation. If it was his close friendship for the author that caused him to arrive at the conclusion that *Animated Nature* might quite as well have been written by "Pidcock's showman," one cannot but feel that this friendship must have had a prejudicial effect upon his judgment. What can be thought of the value

of a man's opinion when it forces him to believe that Goldsmith's work could have been quite as well done by a common showman?

Full of errors as this *History of the Earth and Animated Nature* undoubtedly is, there is scarcely a page in any of the volumes that does not impress upon an ordinary reader the fact that the writer was one who had studied his subject and noted it carefully and intelligently in many of its aspects. We have no reason to complain if we find that it is not a scientific treatise. It is imaginative and it is speculative; but it never ceases to interest a reader in birds, beasts, and fishes, and it was never designed to do more. It embodied all the leading errors made by great naturalists up to the time it was written, and the facts which it contains are facts of sentiment rather than facts of science. It abounds in beautiful thoughts and picturesque ideas suggested by the subject of almost every chapter, but having no illustrative value in regard to the many problems of Nature which a true Natural History might reasonably be expected to elucidate. It stands without a competitor as the most fascinating series of desultory essays ever written on the surface of a great subject. It resembled the author's histories in its possession of the most marvellous power of attracting a reader and holding a reader's attention from the first page to the last; and that is what no work of the same sort had done up to the time of its publication, and what, we may add, few have done since.

It must be remembered that the writers on natural history of to-day are spending most of their time correcting the errors of those of yesterday, and that those of yesterday laughed at those of the day before. The fundamental principles of Nature which all naturalists up to the time of Darwin assumed to exist, we know now to be erroneous; but although Darwin has been their guide for scarcely more than half a century, already his suggestions have been for the most part superceded by later investigators. Buffon and Laplace have been obsolete for years; but the thoughts and the imagination and the sentiments to be found on every page of Goldsmith's work are as fresh and as fragrant to-day as they were when he wrote that work, and they will remain so when the scientific researches of the twentieth century shall have pointed

out the gross errors of the naturalists of the nineteenth. Scientific knowledge is progressive, consequently our estimate of the scientific knowledge of any period must be comparative. Goldsmith had not a profound knowledge of natural history, but it was much more profound than that possessed by the Archangel Raphaël in *Paradise Lost;* and the Archangel gave Adam and Eve to understand that he was a sort of private secretary to the Creator. But people do not read *Paradise Lost* for the sake of learning natural history from the Archangel Raphaël. They know that he was as well informed as the best authorities in the middle of the seventeenth century, but no better. Bacon was a pre-Raphaelite in some points, and Goldsmith knew more than Raphaël by the extent of a century of research. If we laugh at Gilbert White's belief that swallows do not migrate but dive into the mud at the bottom of a lake where they remain snug and secure until the next spring, we do so at our peril, for assuredly the next generation, to say nothing of the next century, will laugh at what we believe to be the results of our latest researches into the problems of the migration of birds. A hundred years ago the belief among naturalists was general that the peculiar marking of certain small fishes was the design of a bountiful Providence to enable them to be more distinctly seen by the larger "finny tribes" which preyed upon them, and that the lamp of the glow-worm was given to it for the benefit of the early bird who went in search of worms before the dawn. It was understood also that the fox was endowed by heaven with its pungent scent in order that the sport of fox-hunting might be maintained. This seems very ridiculous to us nowadays. But is it a whit more absurd than the scheme of education—it has remained unchanged for hundreds of years—which punishes a boy for telling falsehoods in his humble way, and then puts him into the army to begin his education in the art of lying—under the scientific name of strategy—to an enemy, which he had always been taught to regard as the meanest of all forms of mendacity? Every one knows nowadays that without lying more than half of our animated nature would become extinct in a few years. Deception in Nature means survival.

We may laugh at the naturalists of the past, but we must

do so in the certainty that our last words in natural history will be laughed at in the course of some years. We have only to look at the rows of birds'-skins which the modern gamekeeper nails to his door, to become aware of the extraordinary ignorance that has been perpetrated from generation to generation of men who have lived in the midst of Nature and by their knowledge of Nature. Goldsmith affected to be nothing more than a compiler of other men's knowledge of natural history, and he possessed all the qualifications necessary for the discharge of that duty. It really did not matter whether or not he knew a turkey from a goose; but it so happened that he did. He had a good working knowledge of the subjects treated by the men whose information it was his business to put forth in an attractive form for all readers. But no one with any power of discrimination could read his own remarks without perceiving in a moment that he had not only been an intelligent observer of many phases of his subject, but that he had many opportunties of observing Nature in the course of his life. He had spent years as closely associated with the wild life of the lake, the river, the mountain, the moor, and the bog, as is any trapper of wild creatures; and he had gained a trapper's knowledge of Nature in many forms. Can any one suggest that the essay on spiders and their habits, which he once wrote, could be written by a man who was not a careful observer? To say that he did not know an ass from a mule was as ridiculous as it would be to assert that he did not know Cumberland from Kelly.

But we repeat, it is not as a naturalist that Goldsmith must be judged, but as a writer who sets about the task of awakening a reader's interest in the study of animated Nature. And looked at from this standpoint, it cannot but be said that for more than half a century his work fulfilled its purpose as no book of the kind had ever done before, and as none has ever done since. It has been the delight of hundreds of thousands of readers, and it has led hundreds of thousands to understand and to appreciate the things of Nature. We know that while he was writing it he was full of the subject. He could not stroll through the green lanes of the northern slopes of London without obtaining material for his work, and he could not take a pleasure trip through France without

seeing something worth noting about the people and their ways. He was an experienced, a sympathetic, and an intelligent observer, and he was gifted with a capacity to write about everything in such a way as to interest his readers. His *History of the World and Animated Nature* remains a delight to all to this day; and, regarded from the standpoint from which we regard a series of pictures, the volumes must be pronounced worthy of the place which they have occupied for more than a hundred years in English descriptive, not scientific, literature.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HE LAYS DOWN HIS PEN

1773—1774

It became obvious to the more intimate of Goldsmith's friends at this time that his position was very perilous. He had reached the end of his resources. He had forfeited all claims upon the booksellers who had hitherto supported him. They could not afford to trust him any longer, and he had nothing in hand on which he could claim or beg an advance. He had reached the end of his resources.

What was to be done with him? What was to be done for him? What he needed was, we repeat, the sensible Mrs. Milner—some one who would treat him as an irresponsible schoolboy with pocket money. A course of Gaffer and Gammer Griffiths might have done much for him—a taskmaster and taskmistress who would set him down at his desk in a garret and keep him working for so many hours a day, giving him a pound for himself at the week's end. Under such conditions he could have recovered his position by his *Dictionary of the Arts* within a year; but such a scheme of retrenchment was not to be proposed to him. He had lost control of himself and he would not be controlled by others. A movement was made to obtain for him one of the pensions which were being flung about to all sorts and conditions of writers, but especially to those rascals on whose scurrility the Court party was dependent for their existence. Kelly had received his pension for doing some of the dirty work which Goldsmith had refused Scott, the chaplain emissary, to soil his hands over; and Scott himself had obtained a fat canonry for hunting up libellers. Goldsmith's friends could not have been sanguine enough to fancy that an application for a pension for him would have a chance of being listened

to. It was made, but it fell perfectly flat. It is doubtful if it was ever replied to. How could they expect that a man whose pen would have been a power if exercised on behalf of the Government, and who had refused to lend them its aid, should have a chance of a pension of a single penny? The idea was preposterous. The new pension granted was to Dr. Beattie, a man who was not even among the great mediocrity, and who had taken the trouble to prove it by the publication of an *Essay on Truth*. But there was a Beattie epidemic raging, and every one seemed to be suffering from it except Goldsmith, and his immunity was attributed to his envy of Beattie's superior powers. Goldsmith was as sound on the subject of Beattie as he was on many other points upon which he proved himself to be right while the people about him were wrong. He showed that he knew better than Garrick, the great actor, what constituted a good play, and he showed that he knew better than Johnson, the great polemic, what constituted a sound defence of faith. Johnson went mad with the rest of the town over Beattie's paltry platitudes; but Goldsmith never hesitated to express his opinion regarding the worthlessness of the *Essay on Truth*.

It was in these days of Beattie's beatification that Goldsmith administered that stern rebuke to Reynolds for painting his foolish picture of Beattie chasing from the face of the earth those enemies of the orthodox—Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire.

But Beattie got his pension in hand and Goldsmith got nothing beyond a draft upon posterity, which posterity has not dishonoured.

The fact was that he was incapable of acting in such a way as might encourage the party in power to believe that he might yet be brought to help them. This was the year when Townshend was Lord Mayor of London, and making himself very conspicuous by his assertion of his independence of the Court, his action being highly commended by Lord Shelbourne, who had been sneered at as Malagrida by the vitriolic "Junius." Goldsmith was worldly foolish enough to write in the newspapers in praise of the action of Lord Mayor Townshend, Beauclerk tells us, and adds: "The same night

we happened to sit next to Lord Shelbourne at Drury Lane. I mentioned the circumstance of the paragraph to him, and he said to Goldsmith that he hoped he had mentioned nothing about Malagrida in it. 'Do you know,' said Goldsmith, 'that I never could conceive the reason why they should call you Malagrida, for Malagrida was a very good sort of man.' You see plainly what he meant to say; but that happy turn of expression is peculiar to himself. Mr. Walpole says that this story is a picture of Goldsmith's whole life."

Mr. Walpole had deviated into accuracy without knowing it, or without caring whether he did or not. Goldsmith's life's history was that of a man who paid compliments in the wrong way to the right people, and in the right way to the wrong people. He was never quite able to do the best for himself either by compliments or the opposite. He was always showing himself to be worthy of the attorney's opinion of him when he found that he had been invited by the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland to ask for anything and it should be his, unto half of his kingdom, and Goldsmith had begged his Excellency to do something for the curate of Kilkenny West.

And just now he stood in great need of a strong hand to be stretched out to him. He had, as we have said, come to the end of his resources. He was at his wits' end for money. He tried to induce Garrick to adopt *The Good-Natur'd Man*—he had taken it from Colman when the latter offered his stage to Kenrick, and paid for doing so, for Kenrick's failure was emphatic—but Garrick had no confidence in the play, so long as Lofty remained in it. At first the author could not see his way to accept the suggestion of cutting out the part; and negotiations hung fire. Before long, however, it became with the author a case of "needs must." A letter in a sadly shaky handwriting—Mr. Forster prints the signature in facsimile, and very pathetic it looks—signified his acquiescence in the removal of Lofty, but it was, we know, the acquiescence of Romeo's apothecary—"My poverty but not my will consents." This was not the important part of the letter, however, and it was merely an afterthought to a proposal of much greater moment to the writer.

"My Dear Sir,

"Your saying you would play my *Good-Natured Man* makes me wish it. The money you advanced me upon Newbery's note I have the mortification to find is not yet paid, but he says he will in two or three days. What I mean by this letter is to lend me sixty pounds for which I will give you Newbery's note, so that the whole of my debt will be an hundred for which you shall have Newbery's note as a security. This may be paid either from my alteration if my benefit should come to so much, but at any rate I will take care you shall not be a loser. I will give you a new character in my comedy and knock out Lofty which does not do, and will make such other alterations as you direct.

"I am, yours, Oliver Goldsmith.

"I beg an answer."

Mr. Forster thinks it quite likely, from the way the letter is written and sealed with a wafer, that it was sent to Garrick by a messenger from a sponging-house where the writer was detained. It produced its effect upon Garrick, though when he laid it away with his other papers, he endorsed it—by no means inappropriately—"Goldsmith's parlaver." He replied, agreeing to let Goldsmith have the loan on the security of the author's own acceptance, but he did not show himself to be greatly elated at the prospect of receiving the altered comedy. This letter Goldsmith acknowledged as follows:

"My dear Friend,

"I thank you! I wish I could do something to serve you. I shall have a comedy for you in a season or two at furthest that I believe will be worth your acceptance, for I fancy I will make it a fine thing. You shall have the refusal. I wish you would not take up Newbery's note but let Waller tease him, without, however, coming to extremities; let him haggle after him and he will get it. He owes it and will pay it. I'm sorry you are ill. I will draw upon you one month after date for sixty pound and your acceptance will be ready money, part of which I want to go down to Barton with. May God preserve my honest little man, for he has my heart.

"Ever,

"Oliver Goldsmith."

This is also labelled by Garrick, "Goldsmith's parlaver."

He was indeed ready to adopt any means—"parlaver" or otherwise—to get money to throw away. The remainder of this history suggests a man at the end of his resources—alternate outbursts of gaiety and days of depression, flashes of genius followed by profound despondency. If Sir Joshua Reynolds had kept a diary or had written many letters in these months, they would be read with a melancholy interest; for Goldsmith and he were constantly in each other's company—at Vauxhall, Ranelagh, the theatre, and, doubtless, the recently opened Pantheon in the Oxford Road. Sir Joshua and his niece—she gives an account of the scene—were present at a house when Garrick and Goldsmith played their game of Dumb Crambo, to which we have already alluded, for the diversion of the company. "The most delightful man was Goldsmith," Haydon has recorded Sir Joshua's niece's saying to him. She saw him and Garrick keeping an immense party laughing at this till they shrieked. Garrick sat on Goldsmith's knee; a tablecloth was pinned under Garrick's chin and brought behind Goldsmith, hiding both their figures. Garrick then spoke in his finest style Hamlet's speech to his father's ghost. Goldsmith put out his hands on each side of the cloth, and made burlesque action, tapping his heart, and putting his hand to Garrick's head and nose at the wrong time." At Topham Beauclerk's also this entertainment took place, only the parts were reversed; it was Goldsmith who sat on Garrick's knee and declaimed some of the soliloquys from Addison's *Cato*. Walpole was present on this occasion, and, as usual, failed to see any fun in what was convulsing every one else.

But very different indeed from this exhibition of high spirits is the picture which Cradock gives us of the poet at his desk. He was in a condition that Cradock describes as "very low," and he found it impossible to cheer him up. He called upon him every morning, and they tried to work out together some scheme for raising money; but all they could think of was the issue of an edition of *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* in one volume, with notes by the author. This certainly sounded promising; but it can easily be seen that it was not well adapted to meet the author's emergency,

the fact being that it would have to be taken up by the booksellers before it could be a success, and the booksellers would only place to his credit, without giving him anything in hand, whatever advance they might feel disposed to make on account of the new project. Besides, there was the question of the separate copyrights to be considered, and all this would mean delay. It is not surprising that the scheme fell through.

Very pathetic is Cradock's account of how he insisted on Goldsmith's coming to dine with him in the midst of his troubles. Goldsmith was unwilling, but allowed himself to be prevailed upon, only making it a condition that he should not be asked to eat anything. "After dinner, he took some wine with biscuits," Cradock writes, "but I was soon obliged to leave him for a while, as I had matters to settle for our next day's journey. On my return coffee was ready, and in the course of the evening he endeavoured to talk and remark as usual, but all was forced. He stayed till midnight, and I insisted on seeing him safe home; and we most cordially shook hands at the Temple Gate."

That was their last parting.

It was during this winter, 1773–4, that Goldsmith had an opportunity of showing, out of the depths of his despair and with the waters closing above his head, that in yet another branch of literature—one in which he had never made an essay—his powers were pre-eminent. By no part of his work is he better known than by some lines in his *Retaliation*. He does not appear to have suspected, any more than did his friends, that among his gifts was that of polished satirical verse, and the result of his solitary attempt in this direction must have been as great a surprise to himself as to his associates. The story of the origin of this incomparable series of mock epitaphs has been told in so many different ways and by so many different people that it is not easy to say which is the correct version. It is really of no great importance whether Garrick's account is strictly accurate, or whether two sets of imaginary epitaphs upon Goldsmith were written by his friends as a diversion after one of their dinners at the St. James's Coffee-house, and his set composed by way of retaliation: there is no very wide divergence between any of the records of the transaction, and even Cumberland's

account of it seems credible; though it is rather funny to find, from a hint that he lets drop, that he assumed that Goldsmith's reference to him was as complimentary as it sounded, his explanation being that he alone of all the writers of the epitaphs upon the poet had treated him seriously. Unfortunately, he had forgotten what exactly he did write that had so disarmed Goldsmith. But it so happened that Goldsmith's reference to Cumberland was written throughout in the finest strain of irony. It was the extraordinary vanity of the man that prevented his having the least suspicion of the irony, though every one else must have perceived it, including Mrs. Thrale, to whose insight in this matter we have referred.

The simple facts seem to be that the little company one evening began their customary jesting at Goldsmith's expense, and that Garrick, who most likely came fully equipped, adroitly manipulated the subject in the direction of epitaphs. The fact that Northcote was able to record Edmund Burke's pun, in defining an epitaph as a *grave* epigram, shows the turn that the chat was taking; and then, quite easily, it took the form of a suggestion that no time should be lost in preparing a suitable epitaph for Goldsmith's tomb in Westminster Abbey—no one better than Garrick could manœuvre a conversation in the direction he wished. And then probably two or three of the wits gave forth their couplets, touching upon the poet's weaknesses, and Garrick, after allowing them to expose their feebleness, said he was ready, and forthwith repeated the best-known lines of all that he wrote:

> "Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll
> Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll.

Of course there was nothing better than this forthcoming, and Garrick got credit for a brilliant impromptu. He has since got credit for having written a complete biography of Goldsmith in two lines; for should the conversation by some curious and unaccountable chance take a literary turn in a general company of to-day, and the name of Goldsmith be mentioned, half the people present will repeat the couplet, more or less inaccurately, and feel conscious of having exhausted the subject of Goldsmith.

But when Garrick had delivered himself of his masterpiece, it is pretty certain that Goldsmith threatened to do for every one present what had been done for him, and he kept his threat.

It is said that he allowed one or two of his friends—most likely Reynolds and Richard Burke—to see some of the epitaphs which he wrote within the next few days, and they brought such a report of them to the others who had taken part in the game as caused them to reconsider their position; the result being that some of them at least began trying to hammer out a series of couplets rather more complimentary than the first had been to the bard who was reported to be preparing a chastisement of scorpions in retaliation to their chastisement of whips.

Such an explanation may or may not be thought adequate to account for Garrick's long epitaph, which was forthcoming shortly afterwards, and for the reports of others to follow. But there was really no need for any trepidation on the part of the men who had been so merry at Goldsmith's expense. The most sensitive among them could scarcely find a gnat-sting in any line that he had written in his *Retaliation*. There was no sting; but there was evidence of a power to sting—of an aptitude for satire great enough to compose a new *Dunciad*.

The accounts of the revelation of the mock epitaphs also differ. Percy, who had as good a chance as any one of hearing the correct story, stated that it was at the next meeting of a dining club—not of *the* Club—after the one at which he had been the subject of the jest, that he produced his set of epitaphs; but it has been said that it was not until some of them had been circulated and talked about that the full set was produced. But however this may be, the effect of their production was to convince his friends that he should be treated with greater respect in the future, not for his own sake but for the sake of their own skins: he had shown them that he had the weapon of flagellation in his pen if he had a mind to use it.

The power of satire does not consist in the mere capacity to write words that sting or phrases that flay. The power of satire lies in the capacity to read character, to understand motives, to snatch away a mask. Unless the satirist can do

these things he is no menace to any one. Adroitness in satirical expression is no intellectual gift by itself; it is only when it is made the medium for showing the insight of the writer into human nature—for showing his ability to grasp the elements of a character, that it becomes a force and a terrific force. This fact was fully appreciated by the men of genius and the men of the world who were associated with Goldsmith in their perilous game of wit against wit. They did not fail to perceive that he was their master—that while they had been able to do no more than make a jest of his most obvious weaknesses, he had laid his finger upon every trait that belonged to them. But he only used his finger-tip, and that very gently, in the act; he had repressed himself, and they were aware of it. Such delicacy of touch as is displayed in almost every line of *Retaliation* is that which is the result of the writer's feeling that he is the master of his medium. It is the delicacy of touch of the consummate swordsman—of the accomplished surgeon. Goldsmith is the skilful *maître d'armes*, with the button on his foil. He makes point after point, but never wounds. But there was chalk on the button of his foil, and it left its mark wherever it touched his antagonist. Before he had done with some of them they were pretty well pitted—only chalk-marks, but they indicated the skill which he had at his command, so that every touch was on a vital part. His friends conceived a great respect for him.

The two most trenchant of these analyses of character dealt with Edmund Burke and David Garrick—the two most distinguished members of the company. Many of the lines have, like so much that Goldsmith wrote, become the most quotable and the most useful in the English language. The fourteen that apply to Burke have been quoted and re-quoted in full and in fragments:

> Here lies our good Edmund, whose genius was such;
> We scarcely can praise it, or blame it too much;
> Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.
> Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat,
> To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote;
> Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
> And thought of convincing while they thought of dining;

Though equal to all things, for all things unfit,
Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit:
For a patriot too cool; for a drudge disobedient,
And too fond of the *right* to pursue the *expedient*.
In short, 'twas his fate, unemploy'd or in place, sir,
To eat mutton cold, and cut blocks with a razor.

So perfect a summary of a great man's character does not exist within the compass of fourteen lines. Pope never did anything equal to it, and the best satires in *Absolom and Achitophel*, though saturated with venom, are—possibly on account of this saturation—infinitely inferior in finish to the lines we have quoted. Dryden at his best never makes us feel that he is taking a judicial view of the man he is scarifying. He never gives us a sense of his grasp of character. We feel that he sets himself up to ridicule some one whom he hated, and that he does his work very thoroughly; but no one thinks of asking if he describes the man accurately. We never think of asking in Goldsmith's case either; but only because we feel from the first that he never deviates from the truth. Burke had more than twenty years of active life before him when Goldsmith wrote these lines, and yet a more accurate summing up of his whole career than they afford could scarcely be imagined. We are only inclined to take exception to the best known line. But it was after Goldsmith had died that Burke's patriotism got the better of his partisanship.

The Garrick lines are as well known as those on Burke; so that there is no need to quote them in this place. They occupy a page in most school "Readers," and boys learn to repeat them in the foolish fluent manner of the bird with which, according to the subject of the lines, the author had one trait in common. And can any one doubt that they describe the real Garrick? Brilliant as they are, we are never led to feel that they are so at the expense of the great actor. Percy alludes to the "severity" of these lines. Possibly the only person who agreed with him in thinking them severe was Garrick, and then only because he knew them to be so true. But where now are all the complimentary verses that were written upon Garrick? Which one of them survives to be read to-day? And what one of them could compare in force

or in grace of compliment with the concluding lines of Goldsmith's satire ?

> Those poets, who owe their best fame to his skill,
> Shall still be his flatterers, go where he will,
> Old Shakespeare receive him with praise and with love,
> And Beaumonts and Bens be his Kellys above.

If Garrick could have foreseen that of all the praise that was lavished upon him, only these lines of Goldsmith should survive to be read daily by thousands of his fellow-countrymen, he might easily have pardoned the "severity" which good Dr. Percy fancied had a need to be apologised for, and accounted for by quoting the severity of Garrick in referring to their author. But Garrick needed no apology. The force of all that Goldsmith wrote upon him was fully appreciated by him, and he felt that he had reason to be grateful to the poet for all that he refrained from writing as well as for all that he wrote in his *Retaliation.*

The reference to Reynolds remains unfinished : it is the broken column of the tomb, more expressive than if it were complete :

> Here Reynolds is laid, and to tell you my mind,
> He has not left a wiser or better behind ;
> His pencil was striking, resistless, and grand ;
> His manners were gentle, complying, and bland ;
> Still born to improve us in every part,
> His pencil our faces, his manners our heart ;
> To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering,
> When they judg'd without skill he was still hard of hearing :
> When they talk'd of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff
> He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff.
> By flattery unspoiled . . . . . .

And here he laid down his pen. He may have paused to think of the many incidents of that friendship which existed between the great painter and himself, and which he surely in his darkest hours could never review without finding in it a source of consolation. And now that the waters were closing over his head, could he continue writing of the friend whom he loved as he had written of the men who were nothing to him, the men who had walked on their own paths, crossing the pathway of his life, not side by side with him as Reynolds had walked ? How could he look back upon his strenuous days

of dispiriting toil, when, unknown and despised in the midst of the drudgery that brought him bread sometimes, and starvation more frequently, that solitary hand of friendship and appreciation was stretched out to him, and that voice of kindly encouragement spoke to him—how could he take that glimpse into the past without emotion? How could he continue to write of Reynolds as he had written of the others?

By flattery unspoil'd. . .

He laid down his pen.

CHAPTER XXXVII

LAST HOURS

1774

THE last recorded meeting of Goldsmith and Johnson was upon the occasion of a dinner given by the former at his rooms. It is stated that Johnson was so determined to show his host how highly he disapproved of his lavish hospitality that he sent away from the table a whole course untouched. That is not in the least like what Johnson would have done. It would have been contrary to his most cherished principles and his confirmed habits. Had he not avowed that his wish was never to sit down to meagre fare? "What folly is that?" he cried at the Thrales' dinner-table. "Who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise and feed with the rich!" It is not at all likely that one who paid so much attention to the quantity of his eating would be guilty of such an act of bad taste and useless self-sacrifice as has been attributed to him.

At any rate, that was the last time they met. Goldsmith had just finished correcting the proofs of the *History of the World and Animated Nature*, and the work was announced for publication. He had retired to his lodgings on the Edgware Road, and had announced his intention of selling the remainder of the lease of his chambers in Brick Court and of living permanently at the cottage, only going up to London for a month or two out of the year. He was contemplating a severe scheme of retrenchment, having apparently awakened at last to a sense of his position, with a load of accumulated debt upon his shoulders and nothing to show for it—with his credit with the booksellers gone, so that he had no important commissions before him, and with the necessity to work for his bread from day to day, just as he had

done when he had been in his garret in Green Arbour Court.

His situation was pitiable in every way. He was toiling away at his *History of Greece*—payment for which he had, of course, forestalled—at another of the booksellers' Abridgements, revising his *Enquiry* at about the same rate of remuneration as he had received for such work when in his garret; and translating Scarron's *Comic Romance:* it was from the French writer that he had derived the idea of the opening of his *Retaliation.* That was the situation in which the author of *The Deserted Village*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and *She Stoops to Conquer* found himself at the end of his sixth year of unparalleled success, from a social and material, as well as a literary, standpoint. Every year had but added to his triumphs, and yet now he was practically just where he had started, only with an obligation of debt upon him from which he could only be released in one way.

And that was the way in which release came to him.

The complaint from which he had suffered for several years, and of which a return is inevitable with the approach of mental worries, prostrated him at his cottage, and as soon as he was able to move he hurried to London to see his physician. But he had not more than arrived when symptoms of a further disorder of a different character showed themselves. He was anxious to attend a meeting of the Club to welcome the admission of Charles Fox, Sir Charles Bunbury, the brother of his great friend Henry, George Steevens, and Fordyce, the celebrated doctor of medicine; but he soon found that it would be impossible for him to carry out his intention in this respect. He went to bed, and Hawes, a surgeon-apothecary with whom he had been on the friendliest terms, and into whose plans for organising what afterwards suggested the Royal Humane Society, he sympathetically entered, was soon by his side, and from a pamphlet which this gentleman published after obtaining his degree of M.D., we are placed in possession of all the melancholy incidents of these last days.

Goldsmith complained of pains in the fore part of the head. His tongue was moist and his pulse at ninety. He believed that a fever was imminent, and having previously

found relief from the use of the febrifuge of the day, known as James's Powders, he begged that this medicine should be given to him, asserting that it could not fail to cure him. The efficacy of this drug was testified to by numbers of his friends, and most ardently of all by Dr. Percy, who affirmed that it had saved his son's life. But Hawes assured him that his disorder was not febrile, but nervous, and that the powders would be positively dangerous to him at that moment. It is plain from Hawes's straightforward account of the incidents, that his patient was as difficult a one as a man with some knowledge of medicine usually is. He vehemently entreated Goldsmith not to persist in his demand, but to allow him to call in Dr. Fordyce, and, after a great deal of opposition, Goldsmith consented. Fordyce arrived at Brick Court shortly after Hawes had left, and confirmed his diagnosis and repeated his warning against James's Powders. Shortly after midnight a messenger came with leeches and medicine from Hawes; but Goldsmith would have nothing to do with the medicine, and insisted on the messenger's bringing him the forbidden drug. The powders were obtained, but on the patient's partaking of one, he declared that it was a counterfeit and that he would have nothing more to do with Hawes. He sent the next day to Francis Newbery, who, as we have said, was the proprietor of the medicine, for a fresh packet, and this he administered to himself, following it up by two others in the course of the next twenty-four hours. A second apothecary was called in, but, very wisely, declined to give any advice, and Goldsmith shortly afterwards became so much worse that he was unable to protest against the return of Hawes. At the first time of Hawes's reappearance, the patient was dozing, and Hawes thought it better not to disturb him, but the same night, on his calling again, he found him greatly exhausted, and "in a low voice he said he wished he had taken my friendly advice last night," Hawes wrote in his pamphlet.

Goldsmith continued to sink, and Dr. Fordyce thought it advisable to get the advice of another physician of experience. They met on the Monday and were in consultation daily during the week. Goldsmith had alternations of improvement and relapse. At times he was cheerful, but he was exhausted

through the lack of sleep, and his incapability of taking nourishment. For several days his condition remained unaltered, and then Dr. Turton said to him, "Your pulse is in greater disorder than it should be from the degree of fever which you have. Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not," was the reply, and that was the last sentence spoken by Oliver Goldsmith.

For some days it seemed likely that his strong constitution would assert itself. He had a long and peaceful sleep, and at midnight on Sunday, April 3, other favourable symptoms were observable. But at four o'clock in the morning he was seized with convulsions. The apothecary Maxwell, who was the nearest practitioner, was sent for, and hurried to his bedside, but was unable to give him any relief. For three-quarters of an hour the convulsions continued, and only ceased when Oliver Goldsmith had ceased to breathe, at a quarter to five o'clock on the morning of April 4, 1774.

The news that Goldsmith was dead came as a great shock upon the town, especially in those regions where he had been for years a familiar figure. The good tradesmen of Fleet Street and the Strand, who had been accustomed to point him out to their friends from the country, connecting him with many stories of his humour and his oddities—of the easy way he had been imposed upon, and of how some of the most worthless rascals in the neighbourhood had subsisted on his bounty, must have felt as if they had lost a friend; and the booksellers of Paternoster Row and St. Paul's Churchyard must have felt that they had lost a source of profit as well as a source of much worry. When the news spread to the courts and alleys around the Fleet Ditch and through the narrow and tortuous passages northward as far as the Turnstile, consternation must have followed. The poor wretches who lived in the purlieus of the chief arteries of the City knew that when Goldsmith had died they had lost a friend and a benefactor. The staircase leading to his rooms in Brick Court bore a weeping crowd of men, women, and children who had been his pensioners, and the flags of the Temple were trodden by ragged groups of mourners. The lawyers looking out of their windows must have been amazed, and the more

cynical amused, at the unusual sight of grief that had no connection with a trial in Bow Street or at the Old Bailey. Who could understand sorrow among such a crowd at the death of the poet?

There is no record of more than one of his old associates having been to inquire about him during the week of his illness. Walpole wrote that he had been shamefully treated by his friends at this time, and assigns as a cause the fact of his having written some imaginary epitaphs upon some of them, which, he said, hurt them. If there was any piece of gossip, spicey or spiteful, being circulated about a man or a woman, Walpole was the one to give it countenance. Whether or not his most intimate friends called to inquire for him, it is certain that Percy did so. His diary records this fact. Against the date March 10, there is the entry: "Dined with Goldsmith at the Turk's Head.

"28. Called on Dr. Goldsmith whom I found ill of a fever.

"Sunday, April 3. I saw poor Dr. Goldsmith, who was dangerously ill. He just knew me.

"Monday, April 4. I went into Sussex. Poor Dr. Goldsmith died this day, having been in convulsions all night. On my return, Sat., 9th April, I saw poor Goldsmith's coffin."

The simple explanation of the absence of his other friends from his bedside may be found in the assumption that none of them knew anything about his illness—none of them had ever heard of his return to Brick Court from his cottage. His servant, John Eyles, was much too busy during that melancholy week to be able to spare the time to go to Reynolds or Johnson —perhaps he was even forbidden to do so by one of the doctors. Of course it is understood that Dr. Fordyce had been sent for to the Club in Gerrard Street by Hawes, and it might be said that he would communicate to the other members the reason for his hurrying away from them on the night of his first appearance among them. But this assumption necessitates the production of some evidence to show that he was actually at the Club when he received Hawes's message, and it is more than likely that he may only have remained in Gerrard Street for a short time, owing to the exigencies of his profession.

To suggest that Goldsmith's friends had deserted him because of the severity of his imaginary epitaphs upon some of them is too absurd to be deserving of serious consideration. Johnson was his friend, and Goldsmith had written no epitaph upon him. Reynolds was his friend, and assuredly there was nothing to which Reynolds could take exception in what Goldsmith had written about him—indeed there is good reason to believe that he never saw the imaginary epitaph until the writer was dead. It cannot be doubted for a moment that Johnson and Reynolds and Garrick and Burke would have been by his side to the end had they heard that he was sick unto death—had they even heard that he was indisposed. Had there been any question of strained relations between him and his friends he would not have shown the eagerness that he did to go to the Club to join in their welcome to the new members.

But our knowledge of how they received the news of his death gives Walpole the lie in a moment. When the sad tidings came to Edmund Burke he burst into tears. Reynolds was equally moved. He was engaged at a picture when the message was brought to him, and he at once laid down his brushes, left his painting-room, and shut himself off from every one for the remainder of the day, although it is well known that he had never done so upon any previous occasion, even when the news of a death in his own family reached him. Johnson was also deeply affected, and remained mourning for his friend and cherishing his memory to the day of his own death, giving to the mezzotint portrait after Reynolds the chief place in his little gallery. Three months after Goldsmith's death he wrote to Boswell: "Of poor dear Doctor Goldsmith there is little more to be told. He died of a fever, I am afraid more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to be heavy and all his resources were exhausted —Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before?"

Only one more incident remains to be recorded in connection with the solitary man, into whose life, though he was the most beloved of all writers that have ever lived, no love-story was known to have entered—not an incident giving a hint of any feeling beyond that of a true woman grief-

stricken at the loss of a dear friend whose simple nature and unaffected sympathy with every human emotion and every human weakness had won for him a place in the heart of her heart; but it is such an incident as takes away from the picture of the solitary man dying with none but strangers by his side, and lying remote and unfriended, the impression of the pitiable sadness and sorrow of such an end to such a life. When the last duty had been discharged and the face of the dead was already hidden, his Jessamy Bride came into the darkened room with her sister, and what had been done had to be undone for the moment. The black lid was removed; she was allowed to see once more the plain face of the man whom she had valued above all men, and she took from his head a lock of hair to remain with her while she lived. The story of a man's death, however, full of gloom it may seem, cannot be thought utterly forlorn when it is associated with such an incident as this. The last hand that touched his cold forehead was the hand of the girl who understood what manner of man he was, the girl who had done more than all the rest of his friends to brighten the last years of his life.

Mary Horneck kept the memento of him until the day of her death.

Sixty years after she was laid in the vault by the side of the Princess who had been her friend, the writer of these pages was invited by a descendant of the lady to whom she had bequeathed her jewels, to see these interesting souvenirs; and among them, enclosed in a small gold locket, was the memento that she had so treasured. The thin coil of faded brown hair lay under the glass, and on the rim of gold was engraved the name of Oliver Goldsmith.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE MEMORIALS OF A MAN OF GENIUS

THE idea of having a public funeral naturally occurred to some members of the distinguished circle to which Oliver Goldsmith had belonged; and the arrangements for carrying it out were sufficiently far advanced to allow of the pall-bearers being nominated. These were Lord Shelbourne, Lord Lowth, Reynolds, Garrick, Beauclerk, and Edmund Burke. No question arose as to the validity of Goldsmith's claim to a place in Westminster Abbey. The august authorities who exercise in the great Walhalla of the nation the privileges ascribed by tradition to St. Peter in another and even more important sphere of responsibility, have never shown any particular discrimination in regard to literature. They have admitted unrepentant Magdalens within their walls, and representatives of all the vices which were once associated with the stage; they have admitted politicians whose names have come to be significant of all that is contemptible in public life, and soldiers whose incapacity brought ruin upon thousands of their countrymen. Indeed, a stroll round our Walhalla would lead one to believe that the lesser St. Peters had made it a point of granting admission only to those whom the greater St. Peter was charged to exclude; but the claim of Oliver Goldsmith would assuredly not have been rejected had the question of this public recognition of his position as a writer been allowed to go to the head of the Chapter of Westminster. The intentions of his friends in this matter were, however, after a short deliberation, abandoned. Mr. Forster, writing with a nice sense of nineteenth-century propriety, says "it was felt that a private ceremony would better become the circumstances in which he died." But the truth seems to be that his friends feared that his creditors

would interfere with the carrying out of the arrangements for a public funeral. It appears that the creditors' privilege at that time permitted of their seizing the body of a man who had died without satisfying their claims. The fact of his having paid the debt to Nature was not regarded as indemnifying him against the action of his more inexorable creditors. However this may be, the idea was abandoned, and in the simplest way the burial took place in the ground of the Temple Church, at five o'clock on the evening of April 9. Although Burke and Reynolds had given all instructions in regard to the interment, yet, for some reason never explained, neither of them was present, nor were any of the other old associates of Oliver Goldsmith. The clergyman who had married Sir Joshua's niece Theophila—his name was Palmer—was chief mourner, and the two Days, Hawes, the apothecary, and Mr. Ethrington, were the only representatives of the many friends of the dead man. Hugh Kelly, however, stood by the grave, and remained weeping there when the others had gone away.

That is the account which remains with us of the last scene of all. No one seems to have had sufficient interest in the dead man to think him worthy of having the spot where he was laid, marked by a slab. The neglect is irreparable. Mr. Forster states that in 1852, accompanied by Sir Frederick Pollock, at that time Treasurer of the Temple and afterwards Chief Baron, he visited the burial-ground of the Temple, hoping to be able to identify the grave of Goldsmith. "We examined unavailingly every spot beneath which interment had taken place," he writes, "and every stone and sculpture on the ground; nor was it possible to discover any clue in the register of burials which we afterwards looked through with the Master of the Temple. It simply records as 'Buried 9th April, Oliver Goldsmith, M.B., late of Brick-court, Middle Temple.'"

Eighteen years later Canon Ainger, who was then Reader of the Temple, wrote to Forster telling him that some time during this interval a flat gravestone had been placed in the yard at the north side of the church, a few feet west of the Master's house. It is inscribed, "Here lies Oliver Goldsmith."

After all, the question of the accuracy of such a record as this is simply one of mensuration. The word "here" need not be circumscribed in its signification: it may be taken to refer to the graveyard and not merely to the ground beneath the slab, though in the graveyard sense of a *hic jacet* the latter only can be accepted.

It is difficult to account for the neglect in this matter of those friends of Goldsmith who undoubtedly cherished his memory. It is impossible to account for the absence of all of them from the ceremony at the grave. It is impossible to account for the total lack of interest they showed in his place of sepulture. Not one of them all seems to have had a desire to see his grave.

After the lapse of two years, however, a medallion portrait—of which Nollekens was the sculptor—with a tablet, the inscription on which was composed by Johnson, was placed in Westminster Abbey, the place selected for it being within a pointed arch between the monuments of Gay and a Duke of Argyll. The suggestion of this memorial came from Reynolds, and it is understood that the cost was subscribed for by the members of the Club.

When the proposed inscription was, however, read to them at Reynolds's house, it was received with anything but satisfaction. Objection after objection was raised to it, the chief apparently being that it was in Latin—as a matter of course Johnson had written it in Latin—and they thought it should be in English. But it was one thing to agree upon the necessity for emendation and quite another to make the great scholar aware of this decision. The members of the council must have looked at one another as did the mice in the story when they had debated upon the question of the cat and, on resolving that a bell should be hung round its neck, found themselves confronted with the question as to how their resolution should be enforced. No one in the conclave seemed to have courage enough to go to Johnson, and make him acquainted with the decision that had been come to. At last some one suggested the adoption of the ingenious device of mutineers at sea, writing the matter of the complaint within a circle and having the signatures standing out from the circumference. This round-robin was at once

prepared by Dr. Barnard, Dean of Derry, and afterwards Bishop of Killaloe, and, later, of Limerick, Sir William Forbes, who gave an account of the business and enclosed a copy of the document to Boswell, officiating as clerk. Sir William mentioned that the Dean's address was "replete with wit and humour," but the company feared that Johnson might think that so important a matter should not be treated by them with such levity. So Burke drew up something of a dignified type and it was duly signed in radiating form, and Sir Joshua conveyed it to Johnson, who "received it with much good humour and desired Sir Joshua to tell the gentlemen that he would alter the epitaph in any manner they pleased as to the sense of it, but he would never consent to disgrace the walls of Westminster Abbey with an English inscription."

Boswell's comment on Sir William Forbes's communication is as funny as might be expected from him. "The anecdote . . . proves in the strongest manner the reverence and awe with which Johnson was regarded by some of the most eminent men of his time, in various departments, and even by such of them as lived most with him; while it also confirms what I have again and again inculcated, that he was by no means of that ferocious and irascible character which has been ignorantly imagined."

He must have been passing through one of his most sanguine intervals if he took it for granted that Johnson's slap on the face which he administered to the gentlemen who ventured to suggest that the inscription should be in English, would settle for ever the question of his affability. And then Johnson went into particulars. "I wonder that Joe Warton, a scholar by profession, should be such a fool!" he remarked to Reynolds (further evidence of his suavity!); "I should have thought Mund Burke, too, would have had more sense." Then he went on to ask if any human being would like to see the inscription on the Statue of Erasmus in Rotterdam in Dutch instead of Latin; which would have been an apt inquiry and quite to the point, if the suggestion had been made that Goldsmith's epitaph should be in Irish.

The agitation which was started by the subscribers to the

medallion soon subsided under the soothing influence of Johnson's velvet touch. The original composition was accepted, and it had every right to be accepted, for it is one of the finest inscriptions in the Abbey, and one sentence of it at least has become classical, though Dean Stanley, in the first edition of his *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, misquoted it, and then said that it was not classical. He had not taken the trouble to read what was engraved upon the tablet of which he was the legal custodian! Of course, he corrected his text in the next edition of his delightful work.

OLIVARII GOLDSMITH,
POETÆ, PHYSICI, HISTORICI,
QUI NULLUM FERE SCRIBENDI GENUS NON TETIGIT,
NULLUM QUOD TETIGIT NON ORNAVIT:
SIVE RISUS ESSENT MOVENDI,
SIVE LACRYMÆ,
AFFECTUUM POTENS, AT LENIS DOMINATOR;
INGENIO SUBLIMIS, VIVIDUS, VERSATILIS,
ORATIONE GRANDIS, NITIDUS, VENUSTUS:
HOC MONUMENTO MEMORIAM COLUIT
SODALIUM AMOR,
AMICORUM FIDES,
LECTORUM VENERATIO.
NATUS IN HIBERNIA FORNEIÆ LONGFORDIENSIS
IN LOCO QUI NOMEN PALLÆ;
NOV. XXIX. MDCCXXXI
EBLANÆ LITERIS INSTITUTUS
OBJIT LONDINI,
APRIL IV. MDCCLXXIV.

Johnson also wrote a Greek tetrastic which he sent to Boswell.

In 1837 the Benchers of the Temple Inn placed a marble slab in the church in commemoration of the fact that Goldsmith was buried in the Temple. The inscription upon this is in English, the Benchers apparently not holding Johnson's views as to the disgrace that attaches to the English language when appearing on the walls of a church whose traditions are wholly English.

THE STATUE BY FOLEY AT TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

THIS TABLET
RECORDING THAT
OLIVER GOLDSMITH
DIED IN THE TEMPLE
ON THE 4TH OF APRIL 1774
AND WAS BURIED
IN THE ADJOINING CHURCHYARD
WAS ERECTED BY THE BENCHERS OF
THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF THE
INNER TEMPLE
A.D. 1837.
SIR FREDERICK POLLOCK,
TREASURER.

At a much later date Foley's statue of a handsome youth, inscribed on the pedestal "Oliver Goldsmith," was placed on the right of the entrance to Trinity College, Dublin, to correspond with that of Burke which stands on the left. Even the lapse of a hundred years does not make it too late for a University to do honour to itself in this fashion.

This chapter cannot end more appropriately than with an extract from William Allingham's *Diary*, referring to the accidental visit of Thomas Carlyle to the Temple Church on May 4, 1879: "Close by," said Allingham, "is Goldsmith's grave." "Where is it?" said Carlyle; and then, "we stood beside the simple but sufficient monument. . . . C. took off his broad-flapped black hat, saying, 'A Salute.' I followed his example, and thus we stood for a few seconds." As they were turning away Carlyle gave a laugh, saying, "Poor Oliver!"

That is the tribute which philosophy pays to the memory of Oliver Goldsmith—a laugh and a sigh.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE CONCLUSION OF ALL

RESPECTING the last illness of Oliver Goldsmith we have been favoured with the opinion of Sir James Crichton Browne, F.R.S. This distinguished authority believes that the symptoms, so far as can be ascertained, suggest a disorder of the kidneys.

The prominence given to the report that his death was due to his use of James's Powders so threatened the sale of this once popular medicine, that Newbery began to fear that he would be compelled to trust in the future to the profits of Goldsmith's books rather than to the profits of the Powders, the efficacy of which his death had made doubtful. In his panic he instituted an inquiry into the circumstances connected with Goldsmith's last use of them, and collected and published several affidavits showing—to the satisfaction of every one, he hoped—that the value of the medicine was in no way impaired by reason of its apparent failure in the case to which he referred. The affidavits appeared as an appendix to the pamphlet written by Hawes, which he entitled, "An Account of the late Dr. Goldsmith's illness, so far as relates to the Exhibition of Dr. James's Powders, together with Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Powerful Medicines in the beginning of Fevers and other Acute Disorders." The pamphlet was dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds and Edmund Burke, who had entrusted the writer with the carrying out of all the arrangements incidental to the funeral.

Goldsmith's brother Maurice, who had come to London from Ireland as the representative of the family, wrote a letter of thanks to Mr. Hawes for his kindness and for his attention to the various matters of business which he had seen to. "I am thoroughly convinced of your care, assiduity

and diligence with respect to my brother, Doctor Goldsmith," wrote Maurice. "I am also convinced that as his affairs were put into your hands by Sir Joshua Reynolds he could have chose no one who would have acted with more caution and disinterestedness than you have done, for which you have my sincere wishes for the welfare of you and yours."

Poor Maurice Goldsmith went back to Ireland doubtless greatly disappointed to have found out that, as his brother had written to him regarding his appointment to the Academy, distinction is one thing and the amassing of a fortune is quite another.

He returned to his home in Ireland to resume his work as a cabinet-maker. He died several years later in great poverty. Benevolent attempts were made by Bishop Percy on behalf of the other members of the Goldsmith family, all of whom had fallen on evil days; but he was unable to do much. There was not one in the direct line that did not die in the very depths of poverty. The Goldsmiths were not a family that possessed any of those qualities which tend toward success in life. Their temperament, as well as their training, was such as unfitted them to achieve anything in life except acting as a warning to future generations, against the inculcating of unworldliness as the leading principle of life. They had all been nurtured on these doctrines which, if acted upon, cannot but end in disaster, since they are contrary to the established and immutable laws of Nature. It was a strict adherence to the family tradition of regarding forty pounds a year as the limit of human ambition and pecuniary acquisition that wiped out the family. The sum of their disqualifications for success is represented by the word unpracticability. They were educated to be unpractical—to face the world in the assumption that the principles which had been inculcated upon them were those that were recognised by the world. They had no more chance of "getting on" under these conditions than has a man who goes into battle as a combatant with a bundle of lint in his hand instead of a sword. They faced their contest with the world in the belief that the one who bound up most wounds was accounted the victor. They had learned one set of rules of life, but these were not the rules under which the game of

life is played, and they only found out their mistake when it was too late to make an attempt to retrieve it. The rules they had learned belonged to the "royal game of goose," and we know what becomes of the geese in the game of life.

And Oliver Goldsmith was a member of the Goldsmith family. He had inherited the traits that appertained to the people of the country of his birth, and instead of being subjected to such a training as would have corrected these traits, directing them into such channels as would make them of use to him, as the ingenuity of man has turned the dominant elements of Nature so as to be of advantage to himself, he had been taught every doctrine that is directly antagonistic to the economy of Nature. When a man who knew him well, declared that he was a fool, he gave a very good summary of the judgment which the practical people of the world have ever delivered upon such a man as Oliver Goldsmith. The condition of his rooms was typical of his career. There was nothing but disorder in his life. He made no attempt to regulate it. He made no attempt to govern the incidents of life as men who are called practical do—making one success lead to another, and linking them all together so closely as to prevent there being any room for a failure. In his achievement he was, as Johnson said, a great man, but in the ordering of his life he was, as Cooke said, a fool. Of every step in life that he took it might be said that no one but a fool would have acted thus. He used to talk of playing the fool sometimes. That was the only part that he played with success. The products of his genius were of no use to himself, so far as the living of his life was concerned. Instead of his way becoming easier when he had written *The Traveller* and every one was talking about him, he made it more difficult for himself, and the greater his successes were, the more arduous was his struggle. They were Pyrrhic victories. When the last and most conspicuous of all was achieved, he was completely undone. The success of *She Stoops to Conquer* placed him in the position of the greatest writer of comedy in England, and the next day he was working shoulder to shoulder with Grub Street hacks, and ruin was staring him in the face. No one but a genius could have produced the works that came from his pen, and no one but a fool would have failed to make

something for himself out of them. It may be truthfully said that his successes became a burthen to him: he was able to bear up against the first and the second, but when they accumulated they overwhelmed him and he sank under their oppression. We repeat "he flung away his life and genius in handfuls," and all that he had to show for it was a crowd of outcasts weeping on his staircase.

There can be no simpler or more agreeable exercise than the rearrangement, on a rational scale, of the life of a man of genius. Taking a bird's-eye view, so to speak, of his career, one sees without any difficulty the numerous mistakes that he made, the various pitfalls into which he went headlong, and the wrong turnings which he took. The course pursued by a man of genius in his walk through the world is usually zigzag; but one has only to draw a pen from angle to angle to straighten it out, and when one has done this, one sees in a moment the track that he would have followed if he had been a man of wisdom instead of a man of genius. There is no better way of combining material comfort with ease of locomotion in a walk through life than by keeping to the King's highway. The beaten track—that is safe and certain. It is, however, only the people who leave this track and go wandering along unbeaten ways, that learn anything about the world through which they are travelling. We can look at the track left by Oliver Goldsmith, and, finding it diverging so greatly on every hand from the well-trodden highway of security, shake our heads and call him a fool. We can easily see that if he had acted with prudence and a reasonable regard for his own comfort, he would have been as prosperous as a bookseller instead of being as needy as a bookseller's hack. We can see without difficulty that if, after sowing the wild oats of indiscriminate beneficence, he had settled down to practise as a physician and to collect his fees, he might have enjoyed a long life of placid obscurity. If he had had the sense to jump at the offer made to him by the Earl of Northumberland when going to Ireland, he would have got something "on the Irish Establishment," and we should have had no *Deserted Village;* if he had put his pride to one side when Parson Scott approached him with an offer for the use of his pen, he would have pocketed a pension, and we should

not have *She Stoops to Conquer;* and all this simply means that, if he had been a man different from the man that he was, we should not have had Oliver Goldsmith.

It is, however, very difficult for any one who knows the value of highways to refrain from assuming a great deal in regard to the career of such a man. It seems so very plain that the greater part of his life was wasted. Two poems, two comedies, one short novel and a volume of Essays—that is the sum of his work as a writer. His work as a compiler is much greater in bulk, and it bears the impress of his incomparable style, but it is not to be considered alongside the product of his imagination. Are these six works all that might reasonably be looked for as the result of the life's work of Oliver Goldsmith?

That is the question which forces itself upon us; and with a sense of having been deprived of a poem that would have been more exquisite still than *The Deserted Village*, half a score of novels every one of them equal in charm to *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and a dozen comedies more delightful than *She Stoops to Conquer*, we are led into that profitless exercise of affirming what might have been.

Being able to get a hundred guineas for a poem of five or six hundred lines, why did he not sit down and write one when *The Traveller* had given him fame? When the publishers of *The Vicar of Wakefield* had made so much by its sale, why did he not sit down and write another novel instead of a *History of England?* When he could write such a comedy as *She Stoops to Conquer*, why should he not have written eight others instead of the eight volumes of *Animated Nature?*

That is what we are led to ask, and having asked it, we feel that we do well to be angry with the booksellers for not understanding the requirements of the world better than to set the poet down to compile school books, the novelist to compile ancient history, and the playwriter to translate from a naturalist? We forget the whole debt which we owe to our author, and allow ourselves to be irritated at his folly in becoming the slave of the booksellers when he had it in his power to become their master. Finally, we are led to denounce the Government of the day in refusing to grant a pension to

Goldsmith when they flung their pensions to a score of writers whose names convey nothing to us when we hear them spoken to-day.

All this is to no purpose, because we know that genius is usually like the gold in quartz: it only appears under a process of crushing. If Goldsmith's life had been a life of order and method it would have been dominated by other forces than those which led to the production of the works of genius that came from his pen, and consequently those works would never have been produced. There never was a writer who put his own life into his works to the same extent as did Oliver Goldsmith, and we feel about him as we must about every other man of genius, that if the way of his life had been different, assuredly his work would not have been the same; and, so far as Oliver Goldsmith is concerned, who would have been willing to run the risk of anything that he did being improved by an alteration of the scheme under which it was produced? Speculate as we may upon the splendid possibilities of his genius under other conditions of life, it is safe for us to assume that, as the imaginative works of Oliver Goldsmith were produced under certain conditions, under no other conditions would the same works have been given to us. We know what these works are, and would we like them to be different to the extent of a hair's breadth? Assuredly we would not. They remain to-day the best beloved of all that was written in the century to which they belong, and the name of their author remains to-day the best beloved in the long roll of English literature.

APPENDIX

EXTRACTS FROM THE LEDGER OF WILLIAM FILBY, TAILOR, AT THE SIGN OF THE HARROW IN WATER-LANE

MR. OLIVER GOLDSMITH, Dr.

Brick Court, Temple, No. 2, up two pair of stairs.

			£	s.	d.
1767.		Brought from fol. 26 .	25	19	2¼
March	4.	To superfine suit complete . .	6	0	9
June	19.	To suit complete	6	1	6
Sept.	8.	To superfine cloth breeches . .	1	2	0
Oct.	2.	To suit of state mourning . .	6	8	9
Dec.	26.	To black thick-set breeches . .	1	1	0
	28.	To superfine frock suit . .	5	12	0
			£52	5	0

(Paid by a draft on Mr. Griffin, Feb. 6, 1768.)

			£	s.	d.
1768.					
Jan.	21.	To Tyrian bloom satin grain and garter blue silk breeches . .	8	2	7
March	17.	To suit of clothes —— colour, lined with silk, and gold buttons . .	9	7	0
June	16.	To suit of mourning . . .	5	12	6
July	22.	To two yards of green livery cloth .	1	2	0
Aug.	29.	To suit cleaned	0	6	0
Sept.	24.	To coat and waistcoat cleaned and made up	0	14	0
	30.	To fine worsted breeches . .	1	2	0
Nov.	29.	To suit of grain mixture . .	5	14	6
		To man	0	1	0
			£32	1	7

(Paid Oct. 9, 1769, by a note on Mr. Griffin, three months after date, for £33.)

1769.		£	s.	d.
Jan.	6. To calico waistcoats . . .	0	7	0
Feb.	9. To suit of clothes . . .	8	14	8
	11. To altering two pairs of breeches for man	0	2	0
	17. To mending ditto . . .	0	1	6
Sept.	19. To pair of silk breeches . .	2	3	0
	24. To making a frock suit of cloth .	6	3	9
Oct.	16. To making a half-dress suit of ratteen lined with satin . . .	12	12	0
	To a pair of silk stocking breeches .	2	5	0
	To a pair of bloom-coloured ditto .	1	4	6
1770.				
April	21. To Bath coating surtout . .	1	10	0
	To dress suit	9	19	3
May	3. To suit	5	17	7¾
July	4. To suit	7	13	9
Sept.	8. To suit of mourning . . .	5	12	0
		£64	6	0¾

(Paid £40 February 8, 1771, by a note of hand on Mr. Thos. Davies; and £23 October 2, by part of a note of hand on Griffin.)

1771.		£	s.	d.
Jan.	3. To clothes scouring and mending and pressing	0	4	6
	3. To pair of best silk stocking breeches	2	5	6
	24. To suit of clothes, lined with silk, gold buttons, &c. . . .	9	17	6
Feb.	8. To best silk breeches . . .	2	5	6
April	11. To frock suit, lined with [*illegible*], half trimmed with gold sprig buttons	8	13	5
	17. To Queen's blue dress suit . .	11	17	0
Oct.	3. To suit, plain	5	13	0
Dec.	5. To silk breeches	2	2	9
	To jobs, mending, &c. . .	0	5	0
1772.				
Jan.	4. To half-trimmed frock suit . .	5	15	0
	31. To suit of mourning . . .	5	12	0
March	18. To fine ratteen surtout, in grain .	3	5	6

			£	s.	d.
April	28.	To Princess stuff breeches . .	1	7	0
May	1.	To superfine cloth ditto . .	1	3	0
May	2.	To suit of livery	4	10	6
	5.	To ditto, frock and waistcoat .	2	12	6
		To jacket	1	1	6
	21.	To your blue velvet suit . .	21	10	9
		To crimson collar for man . .	0	2	6
June	8.	To altering two coats . . .	0	3	0
	19.	To velvet suit new-coloured . .	1	1	0
July	18.	To mending, &c.	0	2	6
Nov.	13.	To making velvet waistcoat . .	1	1	0
Dec.	17.	To jobs, &c.	1	5	8
1773.					
March	4.	To Princess stuff breeches . .	1	7	6
	11.	To suit	10	0	0
April	12.	To mending, &c.	0	1	6
May	7.	To velvet waistcoat, cleaning, &c. .	0	15	9
	10.	To altering suit, and for serge de soy for waistcoat and skirts, &c. .	0	12	6
	13.	To rich straw silk tamboured waistcoat	4	4	0
June	2.	Tamboured waistcoat cleaned .	0	1	6
		To green half-trimmed frock and breeches, lined with silk, &c. &c. .	6	0	0
		To silver-grey silk tamboured waistcoat	4	0	0
	17.	To fine brown cambric waistcoat, tamboured	2	1	6
		Mr. Hodson's bill to order . .	35	3	0
		Bill delivered	£158	4	4

Mr. Filby's account against Goldsmith, as it appeared at his death, showed him indebted in the sum of £79 14*s*. A portion of this (£48 4*s*. 6*d*.) was the unpaid balance of the preceding account. The latest half-year's supply from July to December 1773 (including two suits, charged respectively £9 15*s*. 6*d*. and £5 13*s*., and £2 19*s*. 3*d*. for a great-coat), amounted to £23 14*s*. 9*d*.; and there was an additional item of £7 14*s*. 9*d*. for a third suit, sent home a fortnight before his death. After quoting Johnson's mention of his extravagance, Mr. John Forster appropriately adds: "Let me at least accompany this . . . with his friend's excellent remark at Mrs. Thrale's one day, when

somebody was denouncing 'showy decorations of the human figure.' 'Oh,' exclaimed Johnson, 'let us not be found, when our Master calls us, ripping the lace off our waistcoats, but the spirit of contention from our souls and tongues. . . . Alas, sir! a man who cannot get to heaven in a green coat will not find his way thither the sooner in a grey one.'"

Johnson's admirable remark appears in Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.

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